

TOP STORY: *The postmodern Malcolm X*

December 14 - 27, 1992

NEW

IN THESE TIMES

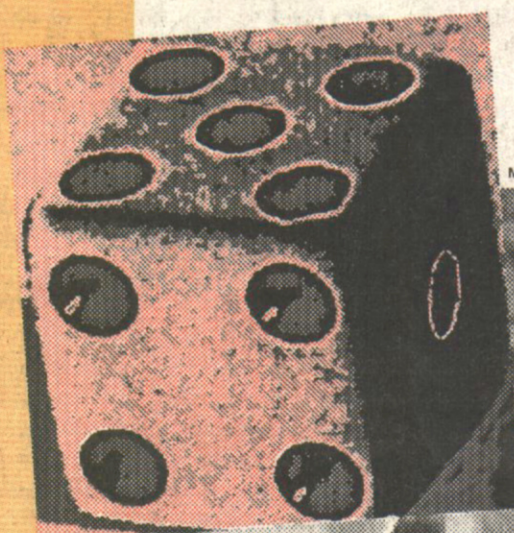
the alternative newsmagazine

CASINO CRAPSHOOT

“Bill Clinton should dispatch federal marshals over to Sallie Mae to lock the doors.”

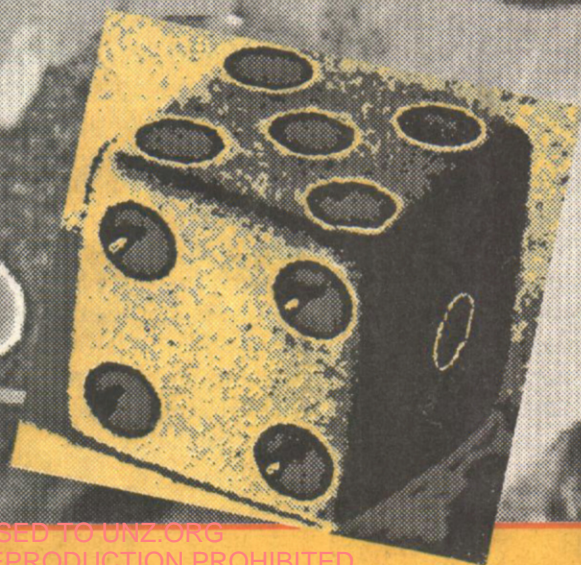
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Miles DeCoster

*The dice are loaded
against legalized
gambling*
DAVID MOBERG



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EDITORIAL

BATTLE FOR DEMOCRATIC HEALTH CARE STARTS NOW

From the beginning of the presidential campaign almost a year ago, the health care crisis was at or near center stage, and with Bill Clinton's victory it remains high on the political agenda. The goal, Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell recently reiterated, is legislation that would provide all Americans, regardless of ability to pay, with quality health care. But in his campaign speeches, Bill Clinton sent mixed messages, and his health transition team appointments reflect these ambiguities.

So what does this mean? Washington pundits and wannabe administration insiders tell us that the fight for genuinely universal health care is naive. Realism, they say, dictates a compromise with powerful insurance company lobbyists and the sacrifice of principles embodied in single-payer plans. Managed competition, they say, is the best we can get, so get on board.

But managed competition means control by the insiders. It means that providers cut costs by providing less care, not more efficient or more cost-effective care. It means a two-tiered system, under which employers would offer insurance that would cover 80 percent of the cost of the cheapest HMO available, and in which those not covered on the job would be covered by Medicaid.

In contrast, a democratic health care system should provide universal access, comprehensive benefits, progressive financing, free choice of doctors and quality health care. And it should guarantee that costs are determined by medical needs, not by the bureaucratic waste of competing insurance companies or corporate profit.

A single-payer system could accomplish these goals. It would cut costs two ways. First, by eliminating the myriad competing insurers that now spend an estimated 15 percent of health care costs on bureaucratic overhead, advertising, lobbying and campaign contributions, all of which Americans pay for through ever-higher premiums. (Current managed-care networks run by the health care industry spend six or seven times more per patient on administrative costs than does Medicare.) Under a single-player plan, all medical expenses would be paid by one administrative body. Public or private, it would eliminate the need for the mounds of paperwork doctors now face.

Second, a single payer could cut costs by negotiating prices with health care providers. Currently, insurers have little leverage in negotiating prices because they control only

parts of the market.

Some people call Medicare a single-payer system that has failed to control costs. But Medicare is only one payer among many. It sets limits on costs for those eligible for Social Security benefits, but because Medicare patients are competing against privately insured patients, the only result is that they frequently can't find a doctor willing to take them on.

In the Canadian single-payer system, patients go to any doctor they choose, and are treated at clinics and hospitals of their choice. The quality of their care is not determined by the kind of insurance card they carry. Medical bills go to provincial governments, not to the patients. The system is not perfect, but it honors the basic principles of democratic health care, provides the basis on which to build a fully satisfactory system and costs a lot less per capita than the system here.

If the debate and the struggle for an equitable health care system takes place only in Washington, single-payer advocates will lose. Insurance company lobbyists and free-market ideologues control the turf inside the Beltway. But there are many indications that support for a single-payer plan in the country is growing rapidly. Four of the six newly elected Senators favor single-payer. Many doctors are now looking favorably on a single-payer plan. (Fifty-seven percent of doctors recently surveyed in Maine opted for single-payer.) And in Cook County, Ill., a November referendum favored a single-payer plan by 76.4 percent.

The single-payer movement could well be the grass-roots groundswell of the '90s. As this story was written, plans were underway for a December 12 town meeting at the State House Convention Center in Little Rock.

The meeting was intended to pressure Clinton and to kick off a national campaign by a national coalition of statewide, single-payer advocate groups called the Universal Health Care Action Network (UHCAN!). The coalition was founded in November at a meeting near Washington. At the meeting, Rep. Marty Russo (D-IL) asked why the delegates were in Washington rather than in Arkansas putting the heat on the new president.

The response was immediate. Plans for the December 12 gathering included a "people's health care-a-van" to march on Little Rock, in which people from around the country were expected to participate. Surprisingly, the greatest activity for the effort has been in the South, where the campaign is being led by Rita Valenti, a Georgia nurse and state representative, who heads Georgians for Common Sense Health Care.

Citizen Action and Jobs with Justice have also mounted a campaign to send 1 million single-payer postcards to Clinton by inauguration day. Other organizations, including Neighbor to Neighbor, are involved in similar work.

Those who did not go to Little Rock are being urged to lobby their own members of Congress for a single-payer plan. We hope you will do so. ◀

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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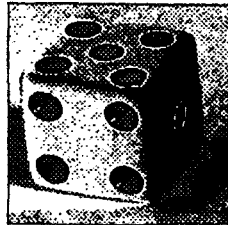
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LETTERS

NTCF defends itself

What are we to conclude from William K. Burke's one-sided attack ("Poisoning the National Toxics Campaign," *ITT*, Oct. 28) against the nation's most multiracial grass-roots environmental organization, the National Toxics Campaign Fund? Even the mainstream press and the polluters' publications call us for our views when they write an article about us. How could you write an article about our organization and fail to talk to anyone actually involved in an official capacity in the organization?

Founded by John O'Connor in 1983, we are the nation's only national grass-roots environmental organization in which the citizen leaders affected by pollution make all the decisions. We take no money from industrial polluters—unlike many of the environmental organizations. Our board is both a majority of women and close to

50 percent of people of color. By 1990, for instance, NTCF had more people of color as board directors than the 10 largest (the "Big Ten") environmental organizations put together. Not only is our board made up of mostly poor and working-class people, but the 30-plus board members actually meet each month to set policy for our battles against corporate polluters.

NTCF is an extremely effective grass-roots environmental organization, as demonstrated by the following:

- Between 1983 and 1986 our organization led a grass-roots coalition to win the "Superfund" and "Community Right to Know" laws. Superfund, a law to clean up the nation's worst toxic sites, was increased by over 500 percent at a time under the Reagan administration when every social program was either cut or held to inflation. We took on the nation's largest oil, chemical and manufacturing corporations, as well as

President Reagan—and won.

- In 1989 NTCF got more than 1,000 supermarkets to sign a pledge not to sell fruits and vegetables treated with cancer-causing chemical residue by the year 1995.

- In 1990 NTCF launched its Military Toxics Project by documenting pollution at most of the nation's military facilities. Further, NTCF demonstrated how the military was responsible for creating most of the destruction of the ozone layer and was instrumental in getting the federal government to agree to phase out the responsible chemicals by 1995—five years before the date that was originally agreed upon.

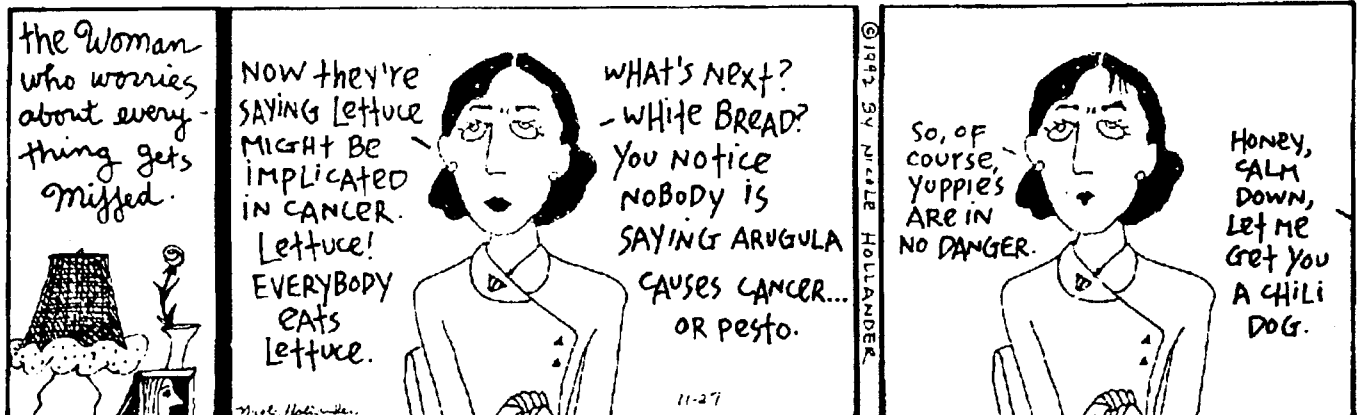
- Since its inception, NTCF has worked in more than 2,000 communities, providing organizing, training and technical and scientific assistance to empower communities to better fight their battles against corporate polluters.

- NTCF is the only environmental group in the country that has a full-scale testing laboratory that has passed EPA performance standards. We have worked with citizen groups in more than 600 communities in the last four years to provide timely information about the toxic threats in the air, water and soil of those communities.

Your article was so full of lies, rumors, inaccuracies and half-truths that we hardly know where to start. We find 29 errors of fact. The entire piece is based on the imagination of a

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



disgruntled and paranoid ex-employee and has little to do with the facts. Your source, ex-employee Adrienne Anderson, was hardly a model worker in the battle against corporate polluters. Anderson is a loner who was unable to make herself accountable to NTCF's grass-roots decision-makers. *In These Times* must understand that when fighting the largest and most powerful corporations on earth, it is necessary to work together as a staff and board. We believe Anderson was incapable of working as a team member.

Contrary to what your article asserts—that NTCF was trying to close its Denver office in order to get a grant—NTCF was trying to expand its Denver office. Late last year, NTCF decided to add two new people of color organizers to beef up Anderson's work in Denver. While she had done great research for NTCF, Anderson was never able to build multiracial organizations in the fight against corporate polluters, an important goal of NTCF organizing efforts. It's our view that, in opposition to the NTCF board, Anderson refused to accept two new people of color organizers assigned to the Denver regional office because she didn't want to accept the authority of NTCF's accountability structure. Anderson, who quit NTCF, not only delayed a strengthened presence in Denver in the fight against corporate polluters, but threatened to sue us unless we stopped organizing in Denver for at least two years. Anderson is hardly the "standard-bearer" for the grass-roots environmental movement that your publication asserts.

Your article's central assertion that "the prospect of big money" from an "old enemy" forced a "good organization" to "sell out its ideals" is simply ludicrous. First, there was no "big money" involved. We received a grant from the Pew Charitable Trust for \$100,000 per year for two years in order to equip our laboratory. This represents about 4 percent of our budget each year. Anderson alleges that because an official from the

Department of Public Health went to work for Pew that somehow NTCF was taking money from an "old enemy." The official in question, Dr. Tom Vernon, is not even a decision-maker in the foundation. We also understand that the foundation's board, which has funded most of the nation's national environmental organizations, ignored advice from Dr. Vernon about his problems with NTCF's grass-roots tactics, and decided to give us this grant with absolutely no strings attached. Pew, by the way, is the nation's largest environmental funding organization.

Next, your article asserts that the organization's founder was removed from active duty within the organization in some sort of "coup." Wrong again. John O'Connor, our founder and former executive director of nine years, was promoted to chairman of the board and is our organization's chief spokesperson and visionary. O'Connor and other directors unanimously decided to restructure the organization and hire Gary Cohen as the new executive director. Both O'Connor and Cohen are highly regarded in the environmental community, and your senseless attacks on their character, abilities and motives are totally unfounded.

NTCF has experienced tremendous growth and change since its inception. Change is impossible without some degree of struggle. Anyone who attended our board meetings over the last several years can testify that we have faced the most difficult issues of our times head-on—issues like building a truly multiracial, multicultural and democratic organization. People who know us understand that NTCF is an effective national people's organization committed to progressive values. But how would you know? You only talked to people who were no longer involved in our organization and not one person currently on either our board or staff.

We are disappointed that a newspaper that sees itself as a bastion of progressive politics and purports to tell the truth about corporate America would

stoop so low to tell a one-sided, sour-grapes story about an organization like ours that is doing such important and ground-breaking work. The author, and we have to assume, the editors, suffer from the same problem as Anderson—an inability to tell the good guys from the bad guys.

On behalf of the NTCF board,
Dana Alston, Catharene Garula,
Charles Griffith, Kaye Kiker, Richard
Moore, Sonia Pena, Ted Smith, Diane
Takvorian.

William K. Burke responds: I have a great deal of respect for the organizing work the National Toxics Campaign Fund (NTCF) has done in the past. In the last three years, I have written two other articles for *In These Times* (Jan. 10, 1990, and May 22, 1991) that involved extensive interviews with NTCF organizers and research staff. I always found their information reliable and their organizers willing to share the most unpleasant truths, regardless of the consequences.

I was disappointed when neither Gary Cohen nor John O'Connor chose to return my phone calls to NTCF headquarters requesting an interview for this article. And I regret that a sentence explaining that those calls were not returned was accidentally cut from the story's final version. Nevertheless, a close reading of the article shows that in fact it was Cohen's own memos that verified several key points in the story—most importantly that Thomas Vernon had initially blocked NTCF's grant request to the Pew Charitable Trust because of his history of conflict with Adrienne Anderson. I also gained important information for the story in interviews with current NTCF board and staff members. They asked that I protect their names. I must respect that wish.

All these sources used the term "coup" to describe the NTCF reorganization in which John O'Connor was removed from the organization's day-to-day operations. I must ask that NTCF provide documentation for the claim that Anderson refused to accept new organizers in Denver. I have a

copy of a memo from Cohen dated January 31, 1992, in which he announces his decision not to place an organizer from the environmental justice project (the NTCF's program for outreach to people of color) in the NTCF Western Regional Office under Anderson's direction. NTCF executives had requested Anderson locate a local funder for this proposed position. According to Cohen's memo, Anderson found a prospective donor, the Needmor Fund, but Cohen chose not to go ahead with the project, in large part because Needmor would consider funding only a local organizer and refused to allow NTCF's Boston office to control the money.

It's worth noting that only eight members of the NTCF's 32-person board signed its letter—and it's not at all clear to me that the letter was written "on behalf" of the entire board. Two board members, in fact, asked *In These Times* to remove their names from the letter.

One of those people was Ernie Witt, chairman of environmental justice committee of the NTCF's board. When I spoke to Witt, he expressed a concern that the NTCF was spending too little time seriously investigating Anderson's charges and too much time attacking a longtime environmentalist he has known and trusted for six years.

I also spoke with board member Ted Smith while preparing this response. Smith repeated NTCF management's claim that Anderson could not build an organization. But at Ponca City, Okla., Anderson organized a multiracial coalition that forced Conoco to pay to relocate nearly 400 families from a neighborhood polluted with toxic waste. Documents in my possession show that in the fall of 1991, when Cohen first sought to lay Anderson off without NTCF board approval, she was supervising NTCF's efforts to organize Don't Waste Colorado, a statewide coalition of grass-roots groups battling hazardous-waste incinerators. At the same time, Anderson was working with a Latino-led group seeking remedies for families

whose wells had been polluted by nerve gas byproducts from the Rocky Mountain Arsenal.

Here are two NTCF assessments of Anderson's abilities as an organizer that date from before her challenge to Cohen's policies: "Adrienne Anderson is the nation's premier organizer on military toxics issues" (NTC/NTCF Staff and Resources list, September 1991). "I have always marveled at your bravery in confronting political oppression and serious odds. I have learned a great deal from you and will always regard you as some kind of frontier heroine for environmental justice" (Gary Cohen to Adrienne Anderson, lay-off memo, October 22, 1992).

As to the claim that Anderson is simply "paranoid," Cohen himself took the time in that lay-off memo to comment on Anderson's investigative abilities: "You have shown yourself a brilliant sleuth, so much so that the corporations you have exposed have come after you and NTCF in the process."

I agree that the NTCF board is multiracial and contains a majority of women. My article focuses solely on the ethics of the current NTCF management.

National women's campaign?

Thanks to your "cooked-up," biased and unfair story blasting our organization (*ITT*, Oct. 28), a hard-working and decent African-American woman worker and mother in our office had to listen to a stream of abuse from an anonymous male telephone caller on Tuesday morning. Energized by your distorted story, this spineless nut-case felt it was "OK" to blast the woman answering the telephone.

Given the way you used the opinions of a very small number of women who are no longer connected with us to smear the many women currently in this organization, I was not surprised. I

am proud of the current staff and board women of NTCF, feminist and womanist, who are the strongest, smartest and most courageous group of women I have ever had the opportunity to be associated with.

Contrary to the typical male-dominated view expressed in your article, this organization is not all about Gary Cohen, or John O'Connor either. NTCF, out of a paid staff of 30, now employs a workforce of 16 women. Our 32-member board of directors includes 17 women. Most importantly, these women (and the staff and board as a whole) are now a multiracial and multicultural group. Our ages span several decades. As workers, we are trying to engage in right livelihood, earn a living and support our families. It is vicious backlash to use some women to attack other women because they are getting on about the work they are hired to do and are committed to.

Lillian Wilmore
NTCF staff
Boston

Liberating spiritual guide

If *In These Times* sought the truth or even made the slightest effort to obtain any supporting facts concerning the National Toxics Campaign, W.K. Burke's article (*ITT*, Oct. 28) would have been very different. The only impressive feature about this story is the overwhelming number of people denigrated. It would require far too much valuable time to address every distortion *In These Times* printed but as a National Toxics Campaign Fund employee, I feel it is necessary to quell the most heinous.

I have worked as a development and marketing professional for over a decade. I have worked for many talented individuals. But no one matches the mentor I have found in Gary Cohen, NTCF executive director. For the two years I have worked with Gary, he has provided me and many others with professional guidance,



spiritual motivation and greater aspirations. His approach to the challenges NTCF confronts in its crusade for social and environmental justice is leadership by empowerment and compassion.

I can personally disqualify Adrienne Anderson's accusation that dissension is treated as insubordination by NTCF's management. The encouragement and respect for opposing opinions, new ideas and constructive criticism by the staff and board is nothing short of liberating. In fact, NTCF's founding principle is based on the concept of using dissension as a tool for challenging the status quo and generating positive change.

I am astonished that *In These Times* gave a few jaded individuals the opportunity to use its publication as their personal battleground. The bitter sentiments expressed by both Anderson and Gillis reveal nothing more than two resentful individuals who have lost their ability to distinguish between dissension and destruction.

The real tragedy is that *In These Times* has deceived its readers, the grass-roots environment movement and all those striving for a better world.

Diane Mailey
Membership Development Director
National Toxics Campaign
Boston

In support of Burke

W.K. Burke's "Poisoning the National Toxics Campaign" hit the nail on the head. As a former employee of NTCF, I know the women and the stories as outlined in the article and can testify, if necessary, to the facts they shared with Burke.

I have on authority from a whistleblowing executive board member of NTCF that Gary Cohen, the executive director, has once again decided to use the polluters' tactics of kill the messenger. The same tactic was used in an attempt to discredit me. I am pursuing legal action on the basis of sexual discrimination.

It would appear that Cohen is threatened by strong women, such as Adrienne Anderson and myself, who are willing to put our lives on the line, fighting multibillion-dollar corporations and using our expertise to empower women in other communities. These same strengths that Cohen has praised us for, in writing, lead us to challenge the metamorphosis that was occurring and in turn resulted in the problems outlined in the article and many others that space did not allow Burke to address.

When I see Cohen in court, perhaps I will have an opportunity to get the answers that all the women in NTC who have been discriminated against

have been asking him and the board of directors for all these years.

Linda Wallace Campbell
Director, Southern Women
Against Toxics
Livingston, Ala.

The good fight

It saddens me to read "Poisoning, the National Toxics Campaign." (*ITT*, Oct. 28). It was due to the extraordinary sensitivity, insights and tenacity of Adrienne Anderson that our community was able to organize against the corporate giant, DuPont-Conoco. Under Anderson's guidance, blacks, Native Americans and whites worked together to win the largest out-of-court settlement ever of its kind for pollution problems. Almost 400 homes were purchased and residents were evacuated from a toxically devastated neighborhood.

Anderson's keen scientific and political analysis helped us understand the gravity of the situation. Her experience was invaluable in developing a feasible strategy. She stood up for us in the most difficult of situations and stood by us. She was the stabilizing factor in a desperate community—people had lost their health, their hope and their humanity.

In these times, when money seems to be able to buy everything from our government to the very ideals on which NTCF was built, Anderson's integrity remains uncompromised.

Anna Sue Rafferty
Co-chairman, Toxic Concerned Citizens
Ponca City, Okla.

Correction

An editorial error appeared in Thomas Karier's Viewpoint, "Free trade agreement is President Bush's class act" (*ITT*, Nov. 11). The last sentence of the first paragraph should have read: "The *Wall Street Journal* found 81 percent of senior executives in manufacturing favor the agreement." We regret the error.

InSHORT



Miles DeCoster

RED STAR MONTE

Betting on anything but the government in Russia

As the bottom drops out of their economy, Russians are turning to imported get-rich-quick fantasies with a bright-eyed enthusiasm that seems desperate in its intensity.

Gambling may be the fastest-growing industry in Moscow. Some large state grocery stores now make the greater part of their income from banks of one-armed bandits and blackjack games installed along counters that only recently dispensed limp carrots and sacks of moldy beets.

In crowded pedestrian areas, such as Novy Arbat and Petrovka, armies of street hustlers work infinite variations on old sleight-of-hand card tricks and never appear to be without suckers to milk. Even Russian TV has caught the gambling fever with a vengeance. It now airs a bewildering selection of game shows, which have long since supplanted the news as the most popular programs on television.

As the bottom drops out of their economy, Russians are turning to imported get-rich-quick fantasies with a bright-eyed enthusiasm that seems desperate in its intensity.

Gambling may be the fastest-growing industry in Moscow. Some large



By Woody Igou

Meatheaded mayhem

REALITY: Four young whites were charged with painting racial slurs and setting fires at a high



school and then shooting a young black man in an effort to

start a race riot in Nashville, N.C. The rather dim Rube Goldberg strategy was to create a race riot so they could then loot stores with ease.

RIPOSTE: Like, yeah, then drop napalm to get out of study hall.

The Berlitz Wall

REALITY: The *New York Times* reports that the Nassau County School District



has hired private detectives and security guards to

catch non-resident students attempting to sneak into the school district to improve the quality of their education. Some districts have offered \$100 for "tips" about non-resident students. One attendance officer said that the tactics have turned his school into a "police state."

RIPOSTE: Stop me before I spell again.

Save that last dance for Eva

REALITY: *Variety* reports that since German unification, demand for extremist music has increased 60



to 80 percent. A lofty example is Stormtrooper, whose song "Jews Blues" proclaims, "We'll get you today, we'll get you tomorrow...."

RIPOSTE: *A 45 stuck in '45.*

Is there a Chomsky in the house?

REALITY: Mexican migrant grape picker Adolpho Gonzales was committed to an Oregon mental hospital for two years after



his obscure native dialect speech was misdiagnosed as that of a schizophrenic speaking in tongues.

RIPOSTE: *A language is a more ancient and inevitable thing than any state.*

—Joseph Brodsky

Stunned by a stupid statement? Nauseated by a noxious news item? Livid about a ludicrous lie? Contact the Appall-O-Meter, In These Times, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Weightless banality
2. Green Acres stupid
3. Malicious cretinism
4. Howard Sternesque
5. Mary Matalin mean
6. Gangrenous venality
7. A touch of evil
8. A cancer in the Zeitgeist
9. It tu, Pol Pot?
10. Horseperson of the Apocalypse

Like the American shows they imitate, most involve contestants submitting to public humiliation in exchange for a shot at some prize. In Russia, however, the big rewards tend to be rather modest: a Kodak disposable camera, a Soviet-made vacuum cleaner or perhaps a Taiwanese cordless telephone.

The undisputed king of diversions these days is the new "Lotto Million," a Western-style electronic lottery offering a jackpot worth millions of rubles for the lucky Russian with the winning number.

"It feels like the only thing I have to look forward to," says Irina Koloskova, a 37-year-old clerk lining up at one of the 1,000 distinctive "Lotto Million" ticket kiosks that have sprung up around Moscow. "It makes me believe that one day, if I'm lucky, I could just step out of this life into a totally different world."

But not every gamble looks like a winner to the Russians. There is one game of chance they have been avoiding in droves: the Yeltsin government's official privatization plan. The scheme involves offering every Russian a free voucher worth 10,000 rubles, which they can then use to buy shares in state-owned industries and shops that are due to be privatized next year.

Government publicists insist the privatization drive is a "sure thing" that will give each citizen "the real chance to become an owner of valuable property."

But two months into the campaign, barely 50 percent of the population has even bothered to pick up their vouchers at local banks.

"A lottery gives you a real possibility to win something," says a truck driver, Igor Melatov, also lining up to purchase a "Lotto Million" ticket recently. "But to bet on the Russian economy these days, now that would be really stupid."

—Fred Weir

NO BIG SURPRISE

Senate investigation of October Surprise scandal comes up empty

Twelve years after the fact and after spending a whopping \$75,000, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has concluded there is "not sufficient credible evidence" to support allegations of an October Surprise scandal.

But how "sufficient" was the investigation? And exactly what evidence was examined—or not examined? The 157-page report suggests some evidence does exist. Whether it is "sufficient" or "credible" is a matter of interpretation.

The October Surprise involves charges that the 1980 Reagan-Bush campaign and the Ayatollah Khomeini conspired to delay the release of the 52 American hostages held in Iran until after the 1980 general election. According to the allegations, in exchange for denying President Jimmy Carter the political benefit of a pre-election hostage release, Iran was to receive arms from the incoming Reagan-Bush administration.

Reid Weingarten, the committee's special counsel who carried out the investigation, says in his report that the witnesses he interviewed who allege that such a deal took place "have proven wholly unreliable." (He does not speculate on the reliability of the proven liars in the Reagan and Bush administration who disavow that any such deal took place.) Weingarten, who was working with a meager budget, also says he could not afford to visit Europe, Israel and Iran and interview "critical witnesses." And, according to the report, he had to rely on the Bush-Quayle administration "to find, collect and analyze relevant materials" that he had requested for his investigation.

Weingarten further explained that the Senate investigation was stymied by a lack of cooperation on the part of former President Ronald Reagan, the Reagan

Presidential Library, the FBI and the wife and daughter of the late William Casey, the 1980 Reagan-Bush campaign manager who was later named chief of the Central Intelligence Agency.

According to the report, Casey—who lied to Congress about the Iran-contra arms-for-hostages deal and then escaped indictment by dying—“was intensely involved in the [1980] hostage crisis.” The report states: “The totality of the evidence does suggest that Casey was ‘fishing in troubled waters’ and that he conducted informal, clandestine and potentially dangerous efforts on behalf of the Reagan campaign to gather intelligence on the volatile and unpredictable course of the hostage negotiations between the Carter administration and Iran.” Further, the report says that Casey and other Reagan-Bush campaign officials “were operating on the outer limits of propriety, considering their status as private citizens without authority to interfere in the conduct of the foreign relations of the U.S.”

Did Casey et al make a secret deal with Khomeini? Which side of the “outer limits of propriety” was Casey really operating on? He left no notarized affidavit confessing all. Lacking that, Weingarten apparently felt free to conclude, “The great weight of evidence is that there was no such deal.”

In fairness, Weingarten said that his report represented only “preliminary conclusions.” A more complete report on the October Surprise, which is being prepared by a special House of Representatives task force, is due out late this month. It can’t be worse.

— Joel Bleifuss

HEALTH CARE IN TRANSITION

Clinton's current advisers reflect policy confusion

Clinton's transition teams are supposed to help him come up with a program for his first 100 days and advise him on staffing his administration. Many of those serving on the transition will later join the administration. Those Clinton has chosen are

the best indication so far of the kind of policies he will favor. But Clinton's appointments on health care policy seem to reflect confusion rather than clarity about what he will do.

Since the beginning of the primary campaign, Clinton has been divided between two approaches to reforming health care—“pay or play” and managed competition. Pay or play would require employers either to insure their employees or to pay taxes to fund a federal plan that would also serve Medicaid recipients. According to the managed-competition plan, health care would be organized around several large health plans modeled on Kaiser's health maintenance organization (HMO). Each individual would choose which one to enroll in, and the costs would be borne either through a payroll or income tax. (See *In These Times*, Nov. 30.)

Up until the Democratic convention, Clinton appeared to favor pay or play, which was also the choice of Senate Democratic leaders, but in September he gave a speech endorsing managed competition. Now it's not clear which plan he backs, but he seems to be tilting back toward pay or play.

Clinton appointed Judith Feder, a political scientist, the head of the Transition Board on Health Policy. Feder has been co-director of the Center for Health Policy Studies at the Georgetown University School of Medicine. In 1989-90, Feder was director of the Pepper Commission, which studied health care reform, and she has been an important member of the National Leadership Coalition for Health Care Reform, which includes large corporations and pub-

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

All the news that fits

The malleable morals of magazine editors have long been notorious. After all, magazines are in the business of finding highly targeted audiences for advertisers. And the consequences are on the page.

Seen any articles on the hazards of smoking in women's magazines that carry cigarette ads lately? And if you were a tad awed by the chesty shot of Claudia



Schiffer, the Revlon model, on a recent *Interview* cover, you certainly weren't

surprised to discover a two-page Revlon ad just before the cover story begins. (Revlon hadn't advertised in *Interview* for three years, but was somehow persuaded to return.)

Now, reports the *Village Voice*, the November *Made-moiselle* stops just short of courageous in publishing a hard-hitting report on the role of women lobbyists in softselling ugly issues (breast implants, assault weapons). Excised by editors was a reference to Phillip Morris, a major advertiser.

Guess who's talking

The latest recruit to the talk show scene is Daryl Gates. Yes, the ex-police chief of Los Angeles has been reincarnated as an afternoon drive-time talk show host, balancing the morning's

dose of conservative Rush Limbaugh on the same radio station. The only problem, as noted in the *Los Angeles Times*: he's too nice. Apparently, that's part of Gates' game plan; he's trying to recoup his reputation.

They said it couldn't be true

When the Reagan-era FCC deregulated broadcasting in the '80s, it pooh-poohed public interest advocates' charges that the overheated market in station sales would undercut public affairs and other community services. Now, an academic study (published in *Journalism Quarterly*) shows that local news was a victim of the changing market created by deregulation. The study, co-conducted by the primary researcher for the Radio and TV News Directors Association, shows that deregulation and the economic changes it wrought had a direct effect on decisions to drop local news among the minority of stations that had carried it.

Thanks for the clarification

MTV—which, as it extends its international reach, is grappling with different national standards of taste and decency—nonetheless has a uniform censorship policy. "We don't censor videos," an MTV spokesperson told the London-based *Intermedia*. "If a video is not acceptable, the producer has the opportunity to alter and resubmit."

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lic interest groups. The Pepper Commission and the National Leadership Coalition both recommended pay-or-play plans.

Clinton appointed Atul Gawande, who is on leave from studies at Harvard Medical School, as Feder's deputy. Gawande has been on record in favor of managed competition, but he is of considerably less stature than Feder or other Clinton appointees to the transition working groups.

Clinton appointed Stuart Altman from Brandeis to head the working group that is responsible for drawing up a new health plan. Altman, a Republican, was assistant secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in the Nixon administration and drew up Nixon's health care plan. Nixon's plan closely resembles the current pay-or-play proposal. Altman also worked with Feder on the National Leadership Coalition that endorsed pay or play.

Both plans have pitfalls—in my opinion, pay or play has more—but neither enjoys solid support in Congress. The pay-or-play plan, sponsored last year by Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-ME), Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), failed to get 20 sponsors. And this week, four senators who have been prominent in health care policy—Harris Wofford (D-PA), Bob Kerrey (D-NE), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and Tom Daschle (D-SD)—are going to endorse a managed-competition plan similar to that of California Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi.

—John B. Judis

CITY HALL GANG BANG

*Gang members assert their
role as community leaders*

Workers at City Hall in Chicago were startled late last month when nearly 500 street-gang members descended on their building demanding that city officials accept their legitimacy as community leaders. The demonstration was the culmination of a three-

mile march organized by "street leaders" to bring attention to an ongoing gang truce, and to sharpen the public focus on their new interest in community building.

But despite this unprecedented display of civic concern, the event went virtually unreported in Chicago's major media. When mentioned at all, it was primarily to provide a damning context for the dismissive comments of Mayor Richard M. Daley. "I'm not going to talk to these gang-bangers because I don't want to give them any exposure," Daley said, explaining why he ignored the event.

The demonstration was an extension of a gang truce that began following the October 13 shooting of 7-year-old Dantrell Davis in the Cabrini-Green housing development. "The truce is holding and even more brothers are beginning to understand that this is a real movement," explained Derrick Williams, a leader of the City Hall protest. "This demonstration was the first time many of these brothers have ever done anything not directly related to making money or building 'reps.' We are serious about rebuilding our communities and we will no longer allow scary, lying politicians and others to refer to our sons, brothers and fathers as 'thugs, gang-bangers, savages and animals.'"

City Hall and police officials generally have expressed skepticism about the intention of these street gangs, or, as they prefer to be called, organizations. "We're impeding the flow of narcotics," said police commander Robert Guthrie, head of the department's public housing section. Guthrie implemented widespread police sweeps of many public housing projects following Davis' murder. "These gang-bangers just want the armed camp out of Dodge City," he said.

—Salim Muwakkil



GHOULISH HUNGARIAN

Istvan Csurka stirs up a nationalist stew

On a cloudless day, the Danube meanders playfully beneath Budapest's graceful bridges, at one with the onion-domed churches and crumbling castles on either bank. Amid the rich historical scenery, the symmetrical, gray eyesore known as the White House, formerly the headquarters of Hungary's ruling communist party, stands out all the more conspicuously.

Since the 1990 elections, the tasteless monstrosity has served as the home of Hungary's democratically chosen parliamentarians. Among its new residents is one of Hungary's most renowned playwrights, Istvan Csurka, the powerful vice president of the ruling right-wing Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF). The irony of occupying the communists' old fortress is hardly lost on the satirist Csurka. For this radical, nationalist communism, like the White House, is an historical blemish, a foreign-imposed interruption in the glorious history of the Magyar nation.

Within the Democratic Forum, the outspoken playwright heads the governing party's largest and most reactionary wing, the *nepi nemzeti*, or national populist, faction. Over the past three years, the *nepi nemzeti* have all but drowned out the

On a cloudless day, the Danube meanders playfully beneath Budapest's graceful bridges, at one with the onion-domed churches and crumbling castles on either bank. Amid the rich historical scenery, the symmetrical, gray eyesore known as the White

ETC.

By Miles Harvey

Fleeing from ourselves

In its third annual report on the state of global hunger, the Washington-based Bread for the World Institute discusses a new category of downtrodden people: environmental refugees. The report includes an article by the Worldwatch Institute's Jodi L. Jacobson, who has pioneered the concept of environmental refugees. She estimates 10 million people have already been forced to flee their homes because of human-induced environmental conditions. And if current trends don't change, Jacobson predicts that "more and more land will be rendered unproductive or uninhabitable, whether through desertification, unnatural disasters, or toxic poisoning." She argues that such an outcome would be "without precedent and likely to rival most past and current wars in its impact on humanity."

Filthy pigs

Hog production has long been the domain of family farmers. But inspired by



poultry king Frank Perdue, huge corporations—with their massive factory-style operations—are

moving in on the hog business. In the fall edition of *Southern Exposure*, writers

David Cecelski and Mary Lee Kerr show how this trend not only destroys family farms and guts rural communities but creates "a waste nightmare for the rural South." Family farmers use hog manure to fertilize their crops in an environmentally sustainable system. But densely crowded corporate farms produce more waste than they can handle. They often end up dumping the waste into stagnant lagoons the size of small lakes. These lagoons, in turn, taint local water supplies.

Dancing with a wolf

In a survey of Federal Election Commission records, *Common Cause* magazine discovered that actor Kevin Costner donated the maximum-allowable \$2,000 to the "already overflowing" coffers of conservative Republican Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas. "Apparently Costner's role as the Robin Hood who robbed from the rich to give to the poor was just an act," the magazine concludes.

Rocking the vote

The trickster who printed up voting coupons offering valid credit card holders an extra ballot in last month's presidential election (see *ITI*, Nov. 11) caused a bit of a stir at precincts around Chicago. Although it's a time-honored Chicago tradition to "vote early and vote often," election officials sent out a special bulletin warning poll judges not to give more than one ballot to each voter—no matter how many credit cards he or she could produce. (Glenora Croucher)

voices of party moderates.

In his drab White House office, the 60-year-old writer-turned politician dwarfs all that is around him as if in a doll house. Everything about the man is gigantic—his thick hands, his drooping jowls, his lion-sized head. Stooped over his toy-like plastic typewriter, his deep, heavy breathing fills the air. Csurka peers disinterestedly out his window across the Danube. He has become accustomed to "American and Israeli journalists" who "just don't understand" the unique Magyar affinity to *nepi* traditions.

The contemporary *nepi nemzeti* movement is the modern incarnation of the interwar *nepi* (populist) writers tradition, explains Csurka in his slow, steady monotone. Csurka sees himself as one of the heirs of the folk movement that included some of Hungary's most talented authors and poets. During the '20s and '30s, the *nepi* writers extolled the noble simplicity of Hungarian peasant life, lashing out at the corrupting effects of modernization. They argued that "foreign" and "alien" forces—Jews and Germans—stood behind the country's spiritual devastation, just as they had orchestrated its post-WWI dismemberment.

Csurka embarked upon his acclaimed literary career after participating in the 1956 revolution. His witty short stories and plays subtly exposed the tragedy of the suppressed uprising for Hungarian society. But the anti-communism of Csurka and his nationalist cronies never approached the dissidence of the democratic opposition. As a handful of critical intellectuals suffered the regime's persecution, Csurka was awarded literary honors and his plays were staged at Budapest's top theaters.

His current political writings indicate that Csurka still harbors very real hopes of Hungary regaining its "lost territories." "In a climate of changing borders and of decades-old injustices being redressed, Trianon [the 1920 treaty that divided Habsburg Hungary] should be negotiated, too," he wrote in the *nepi nemzeti* weekly, Magyar Forum. "There must be quarrels, fights, and local wars, and in the end there will be a big negotiation. This isn't merely a custom in Europe, this may well even be a biological rule."

Since his rise to power, a thinly veiled anti-Semitism has permeated Csurka's prolific writings and addresses. Nearly every week, Csurka's crude diatribes question the ethnic loyalty of "dwarfish minorities," "alien elements" or "cosmopolitan liberals" to the Hungarian nation. The barbs, as every Hungarian well knows, insinuate that Jewish members of the democratic opposition parties are somehow less than "fully Hungarian."

In the political arena, Csurka has personally led the HDF's drive to control the media. "We need to get a hold of the media because there the fate of the Hungarian nation will be decided," he says. At demonstrations well-attended by local skinheads, Csurka bellows that the HDF must "take a whip" to the liberal media that fills the public's head with "Marxism." Further, he insists that the party must "dismiss—if necessary by police force—the directors and their entourage."

Until last summer, Csurka's racist slurs and Greater Hungary posturing were ignored by his party. But he went too far in August when he called for a house-cleaning of moderate elements within the HDF itself. Centrist elements protested, saying they would quit if he took over as party chair.

The current strife in the ruling party could well split it in two. Whatever the shape of a realignment, however, the *nepi nemzeti* is certain to persist in one form or another. When the Hungarian nation is at stake, Csurka and his cohorts will fight to the very bitter end. As they do, they will take at least a piece of Hungarian democracy down with them.

—Paul Hockenoss

T H E F I R S T S T O N E

THE INSLAW AFFAIR CONTINUED

By Joel Bleifuss

The barrel of corruption that is the U.S. Department of Justice has no bottom. New information has surfaced concerning the fate of top-secret electronic equipment that disappeared from the Justice Department sometime between 1986 and 1989. Sources who asked to remain unnamed allege that private operators connected to the Reagan and Bush administrations sold the encoding equipment, which can access the computer systems of U.S. intelligence agencies, to Pakistan, Iraq, Israel and the Soviet Union.

An internal Justice Department memo dated May 16, 1989, discusses a February audit that year by the National Security Agency (NSA), the super-secret agency in charge of electronic surveillance. That memo, which I recently obtained from an anonymous source, states that in its audit NSA discovered that "COMSEC [Communications Security] equipment and key [code] material" had disappeared from the Justice Command Center, the department's communication center that maintains operating plans for civil disturbances and networks the computer databases of U.S. law enforcement and intelligence services.

Security lapses in the Justice Department are a chronic problem. A July 1990 report by the department's inspector general states that since 1986 NSA has refused to allow the Justice Command Center to directly access its computer system. And in the past few years, the General Accounting Office (GAO) has regularly alerted Congress to serious breaches in security at the Justice Department's Office of Security and Emergency Planning, which oversees the Justice Command Center.

Currently, agents from the GAO's Office of Special Investigations are probing the Justice Department's Office of

Security and Emergency Planning. One investigation centers on possible "criminal misconduct"—in the words of a Justice Department memo—concerning the disappearance of the above-mentioned coding devices. Another investigation, according to sources, involves espionage charges.

Last May, a former Justice Department official told me that the disappearance of the encoding equipment has damaged the nation's security as much as the Walker Family spy ring, which was exposed in 1985. (See "The First Stone," May 20, 1992.) Further, sources maintain that the disappearance of these encryption devices is connected to the Inslaw affair—the Justice Department's theft of a software program from the Inslaw Corporation of Washington D.C.

The Inslaw affair is Washington's most underreported and potentially explosive scandal. Over the past seven years, Inslaw, a Washington D.C.-based

computer software company, has charged in federal court that the Justice Department robbed it of a software program, conspired to send the company into bankruptcy and then initiated a cover-up. The software at the center of the dispute is PROMIS (Prosecutor's Management Information System). What makes PROMIS so special, and desirable, is a subsystem that facilitates the transfer of information between databases and thereby allows the easy merger of databases. (See *In These Times*, May 29, 1991 and "The First Stone," Jan. 29, Feb. 26, May 20, Aug. 19, 1992.)

Earlier this year, Elliot Richardson, an Inslaw attorney and Nixon attorney general, explained that because "PROMIS has capabilities that make it ideally suited to tracking the activities of a spy network ... one important motive for the theft of ... PROMIS may have been to use it as a means of penetrating the intelligence and law enforcement agencies of other governments." Echoing Richardson's concerns, Inslaw owner Bill Hamilton suspects that the National Security Agency—for which Hamilton once worked—used the software as a Trojan Horse to infiltrate the intelligence files of the countries, both allies and enemies, to which PROMIS software was sold.

A House Judiciary Committee investigative report released in September under the title "The Inslaw Affair" states: "Documentation and corroborating statements ... indicate that PROMIS may have been distributed by Department officials to locations worldwide." Addressing the reliability of the people making those statements, the report explains, "While some of this testimony comes from individuals who, given their past activities and associations, might be viewed as less than credible, the committee has uncovered corroborating evidence supporting a number of

aspects of these witnesses' sworn testimony."

Israel is one country that received a copy of the PROMIS software. Inslaw's Hamilton now believes that Rafael Eitan, the Israeli spymaster, acquired PROMIS from the Justice Department in 1983. Hamilton suspects that in addition to acquiring PROMIS, Eitan later obtained both the encoder equipment and the old coding material that turned up missing from the Justice Command Center. According to Hamilton, anyone who had both the PROMIS software and the encoders would be able to access U.S. intelligence and law-enforcement databases.

No senior Justice Department official has ever admitted knowledge of the PROMIS transfer to Israel. As the Judiciary Committee's report dryly observes: "Given the international dimensions to the decisions, it is difficult to accept the notion that a group of low-level Justice Department personnel decided independently to get in touch with the government of Israel to arrange for transfer of the PROMIS software."

According to Hamilton, on February 9, 1983, Inslaw hosted a "technical briefing and demonstration" of PROMIS "at the request of the U.S. Department of Justice, for an individual whom the Justice Department identified as Dr. Ben Orr of the Ministry of Justice in Tel Aviv."

Consequently, Hamilton was surprised to learn last month that Dr. Ben Orr was an alias of Rafael "Rafi" Eitan, according to *Ha'olam Ha'zeh*, a Hebrew-language weekly based in Tel Aviv. In 1983 Eitan was the anti-terrorism adviser to then-Prime Minister Menachem Begin and the director of LAKAM, a scientific intelligence-gathering unit of the Israeli Defense Ministry. In 1984 Eitan, as head of LAKAM, recruited Jonathan Pollard, an employee of U.S. Naval Intelligence, to pass U.S. secrets to Israel. Pollard was arrested in 1985 and convicted of espionage in 1986. Last month, two people associated with Inslaw in February 1983—when Ben Orr was shown the PROMIS software at Inslaw headquarters—were shown a lineup of photographs. Both pointed to a photo of Rafael Eitan when asked to identify the man they had met at Inslaw headquarters.

Former Israeli agent Ari Ben-Menashe was the source for the allegation that Ben Orr was an alias for Eitan. Ben-Menashe first claimed PROMIS was used in Israel in 1990, but has never before publicly claimed that Orr was an alias for Eitan.

Ben-Menashe, a controversial source, has alleged that he has knowledge—and I believe he does—of both the Inslaw affair and the 1980 October Surprise.

(See *In These Times*, April 17, 1991.) Craig Unger, whose July 7 *Village Voice* exposé on Ben-Menashe stands as the definitive discussion of his credibility as a source, characterizes Ben-Menashe as a "very knowledgeable but not always trustworthy source."

In a sworn Inslaw affidavit on March 21, 1991, Ben-Menashe maintained that he first heard about PROMIS at a December 1982 meeting with Eitan: "Eitan told me that he had received earlier that year in the U.S. ... PROMIS computer software for ... the IDF [Israeli Defense Forces] Signals Intelligence Unit." Note that Ben-Menashe dates this meeting to 1982, but that the Orr-Eitan episode mentioned above took place in 1983. It appears that either Ben-Menashe's recollection is a year off or that he is lying.

Despite a call by the House Judiciary Committee for appointment of a special prosecutor, the mainstream press has ignored the Inslaw affair. Neither the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, nor the *Los Angeles Times* have assigned a reporter to examine the allegations on their news pages. That may change. Sending an ominous signal to anyone who had a hand in this mess, *New York Times* columnist William Safire referred to the missing encoders in his November 15 "On Language" column. In an open invitation for any whistle-blower to drop him a line, Safire promised to pursue the matter further in his regular column. ◀

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan

So, when I finally relocate
my inner child, the brat
immediately totals
my car and writes
37 bad checks.



G A M B L I N G

Government's bad bet

*Casinos,
despite their
public posture,
make large
profits by
exploiting
problem
gamblers,
including
thousands of
teenagers.*

David Moberg
CHICAGO

The bubble of '80s casino capitalism has been deflated, but gambling mania thrives in the '90s on another front: casino government.

Driven by desperate state and local governments seeking an easy fix for strapped budgets and depressed economies, the amount of money wagered in legal gambling in the United States has risen more than 1,400 percent from the mid-'70s to the late '80s. Last year Americans bet \$26.7 billion, with casinos and lotteries taking a little more than one-third of the market each. If the industry were organized as a single fictional corporation—U.S. Gaming, Inc.—then gambling would be the 19th largest U.S. business in terms of sales, *Gaming and Wagering Business* magazine calculates.

The gaming business, as it calls itself in a bid for respectability, is poised for massive new expansion. It is

exploiting new technologies—such as video poker or lotteries that combine the feel of video games and slot machines—and pushing into new markets. A key beachhead in the expansion battle is a giant gambling and family entertainment center proposed for Chicago. Mayor Richard Daley is championing the four-casino complex, which would cover a 100-acre center city parcel as big as the Loop business district, as the answer to the city's vanishing industrial jobs and dwindling tax base.

Gambling has had a checkered history in the United States. In the nation's early years, governments and private ventures commonly raised money through lotteries. Scandals led to a crackdown, but gambling again spread widely after the Civil War, then was beaten back by a combination of scandals and the temperance movement in the late 19th century. Eventually most forms of gambling were criminalized, so gambling went underground and became a major province of organized crime.

After World War II, mob figures helped create Las Vegas as the country's casino capital, at times using money from corrupted Teamster pension funds. But most mobsters were forced out of top positions in the leading casino firms. Conventional businessmen took their place, leaving organized crime figures in the shadows or on the periphery of the industry.

Gambling gained legitimacy as lotteries spread, from New Hampshire in 1963 to 34 states today, and as churches and charities, which were traditional moral opponents of gambling, turned to "Las Vegas nights" and bingos for fund-raising. A popular culture that legitimated self-absorbed individualism and greed further sanctioned gambling as entertainment.

In a bid for new customers, the Las Vegas casinos have increasingly created hotel and casino fantasy worlds. They range from the aging, low-roller haven Circus Circus—now being expanded with a \$75 million amusement park—to massive new resorts, such as Excalibur, the medieval-theme hotel and casino, or Luxor, an evocation of ancient Egypt. Many theme casino-hotels appeal to family vacationers, disquieting even some gambling enthusiasts who think kids should not be mixed with slots.

Casino gambling began its spread from its Las Vegas base when it was adopted by local authorities as an economic development panacea for depressed areas. New Jersey opened Atlantic City to casino gambling in 1978 to revive the decaying oceanfront resort. Later, casino gambling was touted as economic salvation for Western mining towns, Mississippi Valley river towns and Indian reservations. (American Indians have won wide latitude on gambling through recent court decisions and a 1988 federal law.)

States and localities across the country routinely have been pressured by local businesses to reduce taxes and make them more regressive. Longstanding fiscal problems were compounded in the '80s when the federal government cut back aid and increased responsibilities for the states. Financially squeezed, many states have turned to lotteries as a tempting alternative source of revenue, often justifying a lottery by linking it to some worthy goal, from financing education in Illinois to historic preservation in Deadwood, S.D.

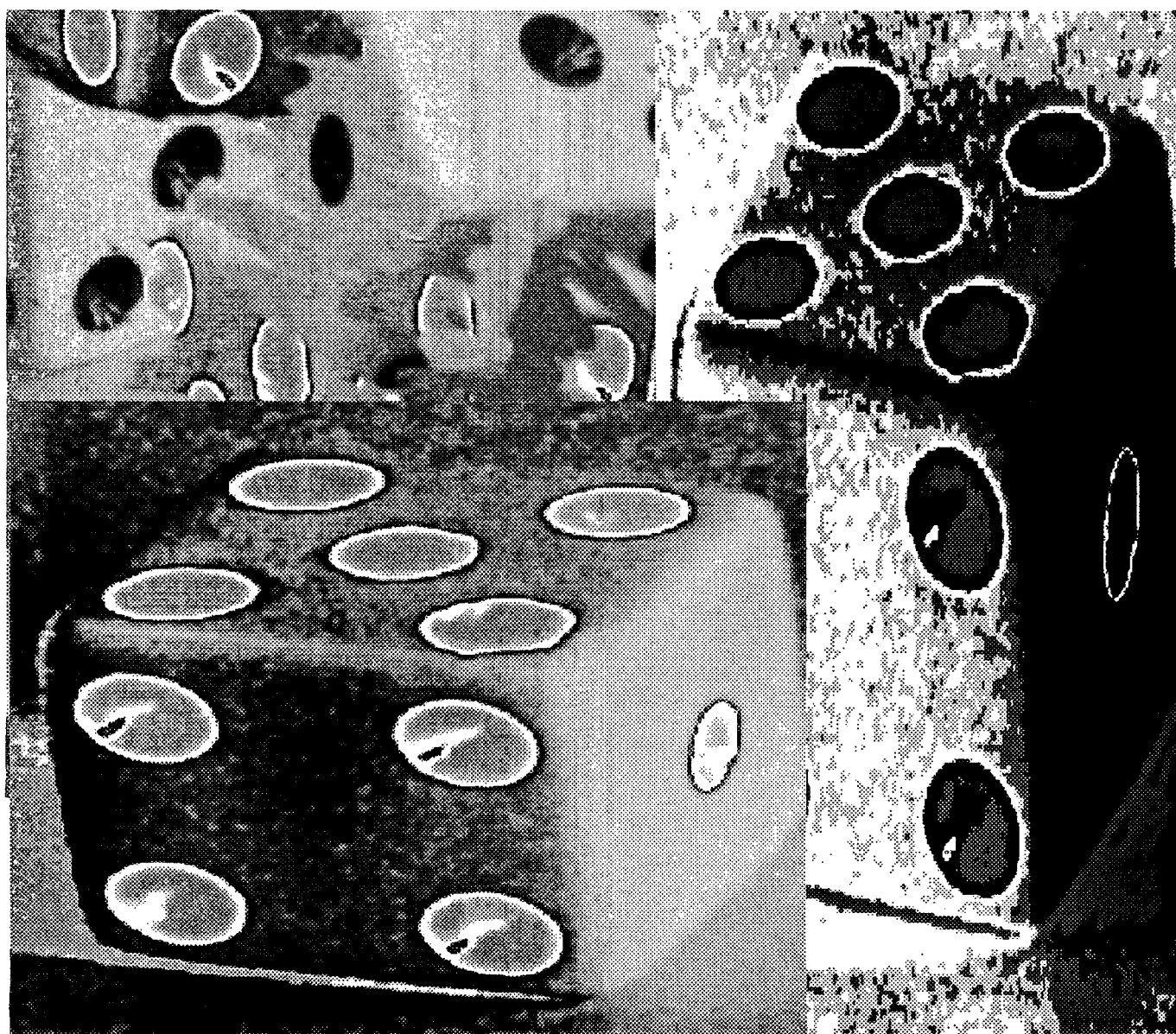
Although playing the lottery, unlike paying most taxes, is a voluntary act, lottery proceeds serve as an alternative to fairer taxes and are heavily promoted by governments to raise revenue. When governments also rely on other forms of gambling, whether casinos or parimutuel betting, they typically promote such wagering to increase their revenue.

Despite the image of the wealthy baccarat high roller, most gamblers have low to moderate incomes, and most of

their money pours into low-skill, low-stakes and often low-payout activities such as buying lotto tickets or playing slot machines. Lotteries, which pay out only about half of the money wagered (casinos pay out about 96 percent), are disproportionately played by low-income people. The states' take thus constitutes probably the most regressive tax in the nation.

What makes this regressive state financing especially egregious is that the promised social payoff is usually betrayed. State school funding in Illinois has actually declined since the lottery was introduced. Gambling proponents in Deadwood, where a garish string of casinos and ugly parking lots now occupy the once-charming if run-down town center, ended up destroying the town in order to save it.

In the absence of a coherent national economic strategy, local authorities and citizens of depressed areas often see gambling as a free and easy way to replace lost manufactur-



ing, mining or other jobs with new ones. But the casino jobs, like so much of the employment generated in the United States over the past decade, are usually part-time, low-paid and lack benefits or security.

Money often pours into gambling towns, though not always with the desired results. Former mining towns in Colorado and South Dakota drew investment for bars and gambling joints, but not for balanced development. The towns also faced expanded public problems and costs, from police to sewage. Atlantic City used to be a slum, as one oft-repeated quip goes, but now it's a slum with casinos. The largely black population shared little in the casino boom over the past decade, but has suffered from land speculation, decline of non-casino local business and higher taxes.

Communities that turn to gambling often find that the flush times don't last and the public costs are often higher than expected. For example, three Iowa river towns, which had spent public funds to provide docks for riverboats, were left holding the bag when the boats moved to less regulated locations.

Much of the economic gain communities do reap, especially in the earliest burst of gambling fever, comes because

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they control a local monopoly on some form of gambling. As gambling is more readily available, more people gamble, but competition also intensifies, and jaded players seek new thrills.

Gambling has become the highly profitable centerpiece of a major travel and entertainment business that aims to bring in new customers, including families, who have not been big-time bettors. As *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter David Johnston writes in his new book, *Temples of Chance: How America Inc. Bought Out Murder Inc. to Win Control of the Casino Business*, the megacasinos characteristic of Las Vegas and Atlantic City during the past decade required capital beyond even the mob's control. Many big new casinos were launched with more than \$5 billion worth of junk bond issues arranged by Michael Milken of bankrupt Drexel Burnham Lambert. The Donald Trumps and Barron Hiltons of the

world discovered what Bugsy Siegel knew when he launched Las Vegas: gambling is a gold mine. "A hotel with a casino can net more money each week than a plain hotel of similar size might net in a year or even two," Johnston writes.

Yet bad planning and management, a glut of new gambling opportunities, huge debt loads and recession pressures have bankrupted some casinos. Atlantic City casinos, many of which are financially pinched, recently persuaded regulators to permit 24-hour gambling.

Neither domination by big business nor supposedly tough regulation in New Jersey has eliminated the seamy side of gambling: Mob-connected firms are still active in the industry (although not in control of the major casinos themselves), casinos are used to launder money from drug deals and insider trading, and "the mob has discovered rich opportunities in manipulating casino securities," Johnston writes.

Casinos, despite their public posture, make a large portion of their profits by exploiting problem gamblers, including thousands of teenagers. In order to minimize harm to the most vulnerable potential gamblers, casinos in Europe and this country been usually been located away from major cities. But now New Orleans has approved a land-based casino, pushed by Gov. Edwin Edwards and city officials over the objection of many citizens and local business leaders, and Mirage Resorts currently is wooing bankrupt Bridgeport, Conn.

In Chicago, three of the most profitable Vegas casino operators—Caesars World, Circus Circus and Hilton Hotels—have pitched their massive proposed entertainment complex as a tasteful echo of Copenhagen's Tivoli Gardens with a touch of Disneyland. They claim it will be a major tourist attraction, drawing ten million new visitors a year, creating 66,000 jobs and generating more than \$600 million a year in taxes. But other studies have put the net new job figure lower—from 38,000 (in a study for the city) to as few as 1,000 (one scenario from a state agency).

The promoters have exaggerated the tourist potential of the site, partly because they realize—as a leaked public relations memo indicated—that people are unreceptive to gambling that targets local residents. But if casino gambling spreads nationwide, the Chicago project is likely to rely even more overwhelmingly on residents or tourists who travel to Chicago for reasons other than to gamble. The money they lose in casinos or spend in the adjacent entertainment area will in large part be subtracted from spending elsewhere in the city.

Just as the economic promise of casinos has been overstated, the potential social and governmental costs are hard to calculate and thus usually are underestimated. (The Better Government Association, a civic watchdog group, estimated the potential social cost of the Chicago casino at \$3 billion, a figure probably on the high side.) Both regulation and policing of increased street crime are expensive—\$100 million a year, not counting court and prison expenses, just for policing, according to one state agency. There's also a less



tangible cost if organized crime is strengthened and politicians are corrupted. Finally, national surveys suggest that roughly 4 percent of the population are problem gamblers, and their numbers, as well as the severity of their problems, seem to increase as more gambling outlets become available.

That means several hundred thousand problem gamblers, whose losses could produce problems ranging from family stress to crime, would live a short ride away from the Chicago casino. The most vulnerable populations, according to compulsive-gambling expert Rachel Volberg, are people who are under 30 and minorities (especially African-Americans and Latinos), who often have limited education or low incomes. That profile fits many already beleaguered Chicagoans.

Illinois Republican Gov. Jim Edgar has pledged to veto the casino legislation now before the state legislature. The Chicago business establishment is split, but organized labor and some minority and community organizations (including Illinois Public Action) have backed the casino. Mayor Daley has tried to win support by promising something to everyone—cutting business taxes, employing public housing authority residents and financing a \$1 billion state capital spending program for schools from casino tax proceeds. When attacked, he insists there is no alternative.

It is true that Chicago, like many cities, has lost manufacturing jobs—about 400,000 from 1970 to 1990—and faces financial problems. Daley's 1993 budget includes the second property tax hike in two years and job cuts. But his own economic development commission last year said that an aggressive program of developing industrial parks in the city could create 150,000 new jobs. Smaller-scale help to local manufacturing and promotion of new industries, especially in energy efficiency, could yield many individually small but cumulatively large job gains. Also, replacing the state's flat income tax with a mildly progressive tax could yield \$1.5 billion a year.

Daley's obsession with politically splashy mega-projects distracts the city from alternative strategies. But without the federal funding needed to rebuild the cities and a national

economic strategy to strengthen manufacturing, mayors around the country will be tempted by the illusion of free private investment to rejuvenate inner cities.

As gambling spreads, these casinos will prove to be panaceas for neither jobs nor taxes, warns William Eadington, director of the Institute for the Study of Gambling at the University of Nevada, Reno. The urban casinos are likely to have limited tourist appeal. But the casinos are playing state and city against each other, warning that if they don't jump on the bandwagon, other jurisdictions will win the jackpot instead. Governmental panic, Eadington warns, is producing bad public policy, including inadequate regulation.

For example, governmental reliance on gambling for jobs or taxes triggers lax regulation (New Jersey cracks down on casino employees but not the owners) and shameless huckstering of gambling (as lottery proceeds have declined, states have advertised heavily and devised new games), leading to a perverse casino government.

Suppression or criminalization of gambling doesn't work either—people persist in their illicit pleasures—and often produces socially harmful results, from fostering criminal enterprises to endangering civil liberties. Yet opening up these vices to commercial exploitation in the free market, especially by big business, can intensify and expand abuse of problematic activities, whether smoking, drinking or gambling. Society can best tackle such activities by attempting to balance tolerance with education and strict regulation, including a ban on advertising and promotion.

Attempting to balance the books by turning to casinos, however, is a government recipe for social disaster. ◀

Las Vegas, the union town

Las Vegas has been a union town in the good and bad sense of the word. Teamster pension money helped build it, and federal law enforcement officials have in the past linked top leaders in the town's two big unions, the Teamsters and Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE), to organized crime figures who built up the city.

But it's also true that four-fifths of the major casinos and hotels are unionized, and much of the burst of recruitment in recent years has been done by diligent, honest organizers. HERE's recent militancy and political action is also reviving the Nevada labor movement and inspiring allies throughout the region.

Since September of last year, 550 workers at the Frontier Hotel and Gambling Hall have been on strike against their employer's cutbacks and anti-union tactics. All the workers, members of HERE, Teamsters and two other unions, have refused to cross the picket line. A federal labor judge found management committed unfair labor practices, so the striking workers won't be permanently replaced. Frontier's new anti-union owners had unilaterally cut wages drastically and ended the workers' pension plan.

Since an industry strike in 1984, most of the big casinos have decided it's good business to maintain smooth labor relations. Circus Circus management has even provided picketers at Frontier free meals three times a day, all week long—an indication of the business establishment's discontent with Frontier's tactics. Workers from Nevada and the West Coast have recently rallied in solidarity, and a large demonstration was held earlier this month.

EDUCATION

Shut down Sallie Mae

W

*Dispensing
student loans
has become a
boondoggle for
banks and the
Student Loan
Marketing
Association
(Sallie Mae).*

By John B. Judis
WASHINGTON D.C.

When Bill Clinton begins reforming the nation's educational system, he should start with the student loan program. It is one of those programs set up to aid a worthy constituency, but has ended up primarily benefiting the businessmen who run it for the government.

Dispensing student loans has become a boondoggle for banks and the Student Loan Marketing Association (Sallie Mae). The federal program provides minimal loans to students—\$3,000 a year—but huge salaries and guaranteed profits to bankers.

For two years, Senators Paul Simon (D-IL) and Robert Durenberger (R-MN) and Rep. Robert Andrews (D-NJ) have been trying to pass a bill that would get the government to loan students the money directly and collect the loans through the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The

General Accounting Office (GAO) has estimated that this proposal would save at least \$2 billion a year, even though it would double the size of student loans and allow students who take lower-income jobs to pay less interest and repay the loans over a longer period.

While the Bush administration balked at their proposal, President-elect Bill Clinton has endorsed it. But Sallie Mae and the banks—about 10,000 hold student loans—have mounted a furious lobbying campaign to maintain the status quo.

Here's how the program currently works. Banks lend students loans at lower-than-market rates. The government pays all interest on the loans while students are in school, and then afterwards pays the difference between what students pay and what they would pay at market rates. The government also guarantees the loans, reimbursing the banks if the students default.

The Nixon administration set up Sallie Mae in 1972 to increase the volume of student loans. The amount of loans any bank can make is limited by its savings deposits. The banks themselves like to keep the loans while the students are in school and the government is automatically paying the interest on them, but afterwards the banks have been content to sell them to Sallie Mae rather than pay the costs of collecting them. Once a loan is sold to Sallie Mae, the banks can make new student loans. Sallie Mae now owns about 30 percent of student loans.

Sallie Mae is the perfect hustle. Its operating capital comes from government-backed bonds. The payment on the loans it buys is guaranteed by the government. Any business school graduate could glean a profit from such an arrangement, but Sallie Mae's executives are paid as if they were Fortune 500 officials. According to the GAO, Sallie Mae's president, Lawrence A. Hough, was compensated \$2,187,651 in 1991 and Albert Lord Jr., the vice president, received \$1,741,337.

Overall, the government spends \$6 billion a year to allow the banks and Sallie Mae to provide \$12 billion in loans and to pay the officers' enormous salaries. Of this \$6 billion, the government spends \$1 billion subsidizing banks and Sallie Mae, and \$4 billion on loan defaults. According to the GAO, the government, by funding the loans directly, could save \$1 billion in subsidies. By collecting them through the IRS, the government could save at least another \$1 billion in default costs, since the IRS can collect money far more efficiently than banks or Sallie Mae.

Simon first proposed his direct loan program two years ago, but Sallie Mae and the banks were able to prevent passage of any program until last summer. Last June, Congress passed a proposal for a pilot program of direct loans involv-

ing 500 colleges, but the administration, threatening a veto, whittled this down to a \$500 million program. The bill also did not specify how loans would be collected—whether through private agencies that the government hires or through the IRS.

Early in his campaign Clinton made it clear that he backed Simon's proposal. In a February interview with *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Clinton said, "I support simplifying the student aid program by eliminating banks from the process and making direct loans to students through their colleges and trade schools." Clinton has also proposed forgiving loans to students who go into certain targeted jobs—a proposal that intersects with his ideas for national service.

But Sallie Mae and the banks are determined to stop Clinton. The *Education Daily* reported last month that "major financial players in the federal student loan program are gearing up to protect themselves from a possible Clinton administration attack."

Sallie Mae has also called on university officials who are paid to serve on its board. For instance, William Ihlanfeldt, who is vice president of university relations at Northwestern University, is also vice chairman of Sallie Mae. At Ihlanfeldt's behest, Northwestern has gone on record against direct loans. Numerous universities also own stock in Sallie Mae.

Sallie Mae epitomizes much of what can go wrong when the federal government sets up a quasi-private monopoly and guarantees it enormous profits. Initially, the institution plays a useful role, but then it becomes obsolete. Under attack, the institution uses its government-guaranteed profits to hire lobbyists and public relations experts to prevent the government from elimi-

nating it.

Getting rid of Sallie Mae will prove a good test of Clinton's resolve to reinvent government. To begin with, he can get his secretary of education to meet with the IRS commissioner to work out loan collection for the pilot program passed last year. Then he can put the entire program under government and IRS control.

Mission accomplished, he can dispatch federal marshals over to Sallie Mae to lock the doors. ◀



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C Z E C H O S L O V A K I A

Blue velvet

The "velvet divorce" raises deep concerns about the fragile stability of Central Europe.

By Stephanie Baker
and Paul Hokenos

PRAGUE

From behind his new desk, Czech Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus confidently dismisses fears of a "big bang." The partition of Czechoslovakia, Klaus insists, will proceed as peacefully and—if he has his way—almost as swiftly as the Velvet Revolution of 1989.

But as the New Year 1993 date for division nears, its ramifications have prompted even some of its first proponents to think twice. In an atmosphere of haste and mounting tension, the headlong rush toward separate Czech and Slovak states has already acquired some of the more sordid features of the post-communist nationality conflicts in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The "velvet divorce" has raised deep concerns about the fragile stability of Central Europe, as

well as the quality of democracy within its borders.

Since the June elections, the diametrically opposed personalities of the radical free-marketeer Klaus and his Slovak counterpart Vladimir Meciar have come to symbolize the divergent ways of Czechs and Slovaks. In Slovakia, Meciar, a burly former heavy-weight champion, brought his Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (MDS) to a landslide victory on a classic national-populist ticket. Slovak nationalists, wary of Klaus' economic "shock-therapy" recipe for underdeveloped Slovakia, sought a "confederation" between the two nations, which would have cut the Slovaks more leeway to take a slower track on economic reform.

But Klaus, the slick former finance minister, now wants even less to do with backward Slovakia than its old-school nationalists want with Prague. Knowing well the Slovaks' unhappiness with Czech dominance in the common federation, Klaus' right-wing Civic Democratic Party (CDP) campaigned on an uncompromising "federation or nothing" plank. Despite poll after poll that attested to most Czechs and Slovaks' desire to live

another day together, the politicians put the nations on a collision course.

It has become disturbingly obvious, however, that neither protagonist cares a bit for the will of the electorate at large. Virtually ignoring the federal parliament, Klaus and Meciar met eight times since June to hammer out the details of the split. The sailing was anything but smooth. To the Slovaks' chagrin, the Czech side insisted upon a definitive break into two fully independent states. For Klaus, such a partition would not only leave Slovakia to go the way of the Balkans on its own, but would also fracture the potent if awkward opposition constellation of Slovak nationalists and Czech leftists that has coalesced against him.

After some forceful lobbying from the European Community (EC), the Czechs finally knuckled under to a common customs union between the two states. But there they drew the line. There will be no common citizenship policy, no joint defense policy, no federal institutions and a common currency only until 1994.

So, like it or not, radical Slovak nationalists are finally getting what they had long been crying for. But so suddenly has independence landed in their laps that they have neither a clear vision of nor coherent policies for their very own little Slovakia. Already, Meciar's promise to soften the economic impact of reform seems set to backfire. At a July meeting with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, Meciar's economists were read the hard facts: In order to win IMF backing, they will have to follow the same stringent monetarist policies that Klaus advocates.

But on other fronts, the Slovaks are forging recklessly ahead on their own. Meciar and his nationalist allies, some of an even darker stripe than the MDS, have initiated a nasty war of words with neighboring Hungary. The flash-point of hostility is the well-organized, 600,000-strong Magyar minority along the southern Slovak frontier. The Slovaks have lost no time in alienating the minority, quickly squelching its demands for minority rights and cultural autonomy. The new Slovak constitution defines Slovakia in purely ethnic terms: "We, the Slovak nation." The changed wording, which the Hungarian parties had tried to retain as "We, the citizens of the Slovak republic," prompted the minority representatives to walk out of parliament in protest.

The Slovaks have also unearthed old ghosts with their unilateral decision to start up the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros hydroelectric plant on the Slovakian side of the Danube. A brainchild of the Stalinist fervor during the early '50s, the colossal dam project had been conceived as a joint Czechoslovak-Hungarian enterprise. But in the '80s, the Hungarian government, under pressure from a burgeoning environmental movement, opted out of the costly project.

The Slovaks have never forgiven their neighbors, and what began as an environmental issue has mushroomed into a full-scale national and political showdown. Slovakia's diversion of the Danube in October sparked international outcry and the near resignation of the Czechoslovak federal government, which had promised the EC that no action would be taken on the dam until a common agreement had been reached. In Budapest, the ruling nationalists (a regime whose story grows more vile by the week) have manipulated the issue to arouse resentment against the Slovaks. Meciar, in turn, has leveled crass charges of anti-Semitism and irridentism against the Hungarians, using a tone ominously reminiscent of that employed between Serbs and Croats two years ago.

Although the new level of Slovak-Magyar hostility appears the most troubling development at the moment, a degeneration of the historically civil relations between the 10 million Czechs and 5 million Slovaks could also be in the cards. After ditching Slovakia and its 12 percent unemployment rate, Klaus insists that he will march the Czech lands straight into Europe on the "fast track." But the sticky issue of divvying up federal property still remains in limbo. Questions over who gets what and how much are certain to increase animosity between the nations, particularly since not even the more prosperous Czech lands are ready to eat at the Western European table.

Both Meciar and Klaus face growing criticism that they overstepped their electoral mandates. An unlikely coalition of opposition parties called in vain for a referendum on the state's dissolution. But even former Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel, an early advocate of a democratic referendum, threw in the towel. Perhaps a bit duplicitously, Czechoslovakia's star dissident, once the defiant voice of moral authority, resigned himself to the division, strategically



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Vaclav Havel has strategically positioned himself to be the next Czech president.

positioning himself as the next Czech president. On the relationship between truth and power, the philosopher-playwright has kept noticeably silent of late.

The Czechs, and to a lesser extent the Slovaks, are among the few Central or Eastern European countries to boast a genuine democratic tradition. Yet today the legacy of the interwar Czechoslovak republic seems more rhetorical trapping than concrete precedent. On October 28, the 74th anniversary of the republic, only the ultra-right Czech Republican Party, which recently captured seats in both the Czech and federal legislatures, managed to organize a commemorative rally. Behind their Western veneer, Klaus and the CDP have exhibited some strikingly authoritarian, undemocratic tendencies. And in northern Bohemia, relations between the Bohemians and Gypsies border on virtual race wars.

Even if outright violence between Czechoslovakia's cohabitants is averted, the breakup of the common state presents a disturbing omen. In a region of mixed nationalities and long-simmering ethnic disputes, Czechoslovakia served as a model of a working multi-national federative state. With ethnic and national strife consuming the young democracies of Eastern Europe one after another, Czechoslovakia's dismantlement eliminates one more constructive precedent for the region to draw upon. ◀

Stephanie Baker works for the Helsinki Citizens Assembly in Prague.

NATIONAL SERVICE

New VISTAs ahead?

*If Clinton
reinvigorates
VISTA as part
of his national
service plan,
volunteers
could help
energize
thousands of
grass-roots
organizations.*

By Robin Epstein

T

hough Bill Clinton champions national service as a way for college graduates to pay back student loans, he also hopes his plan to spend up to \$8 billion creating 250,000 national service positions will spark a stronger commitment to community among Americans young and old, rich and poor.

Invoking the legacy of the G.I. Bill and the Peace Corps in a September speech, Clinton vowed to give people from all walks of life a "summons to service and to citizenship." "Just think of it," Clinton said during a campaign stop at the University of Notre Dame, "millions ... teaching the children, policing the streets, caring for the sick, working with the elderly or people with disabilities, building homes, helping children stay off drugs and out of gangs." All of Clinton's examples describe volunteers providing direct services to people in need.

But people immersed in citizen efforts to solve local problems hope his national service proposal will also fund community organizers.

In 1988 he wrote a glowing preface for a book on his state's experience with VISTA, the federally funded domestic peace corps, during its first 20 years. "Contemporary Arkansas history owes much to the groundbreaking efforts of VISTA volunteers," Clinton wrote of Volunteers in Service to America, a program inspired by his role model John F. Kennedy and created by Lyndon Johnson during the War on Poverty. "VISTA projects relied on the ... hard work of people within poverty communities and demonstrated that the effective use of resources and planning would produce positive results, but only if the people themselves maintained the effort."

Clinton's appreciation for VISTA is good news. If he reinvigorates the agency as part of his national service plan, its volunteers could

help energize thousands of grass-roots organizations that have hung on by a thread during the Reagan and Bush administrations. "If citizen groups depend on philanthropy to fuel the grass-roots movement, we'll wait until hell freezes over," says Pablo Eisenberg, executive director of the Center for Community Change. "To rebuild inner cities and poor rural areas we need strong resident involvement. For Clinton, pumping money into community groups so they can fight for their own rights is a cheap way to go."

Since VISTA's inception in 1965, VISTA volunteers have functioned more like community organizers than direct service providers—though, depending on the prevailing political winds, they haven't always claimed that label. In the early days, most volunteers were middle class and worked far from home. Then in the '70s, VISTA strived to place college-educated volunteers next to low-income volunteers from the communities the program served, says Margery Tabankin, VISTA director during the Carter administration. During the Reagan years, middle-class volunteers were dubbed outside agitators by conservatives, so VISTA participation was limited to community residents. Under Bush, VISTA was allowed to once again recruit from outside the communities, but funding shortages hampered its efforts.

VISTA's anti-poverty focus distinguishes it from many service programs. Volunteers, who work in 764 public agencies and non-profits in 50 states, live in poor communities and subsist on allowances averaging \$610 a month. They receive health insurance, are eligible for deferral or some forgiveness of student loans and don't lose welfare benefits.

VISTA already receives many more requests from prospective volunteers and sponsors than it can accommodate with its \$40 million budget. Clinton could double the number of VISTA volunteers from the current 3,500 with-

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out restructuring the agency, says Tabankin, and it could easily grow beyond that with additional management staff.

"Most people, however, believe VISTA is either dead or a credit card," says Mimi Mager, Tabankin's special assistant during the Carter administration. "VISTA needs revitalized leadership. It's had none. Public awareness and recruitment are essential."

Pennsylvania Sen. Harris Wofford, one of the nation's premier national service experts, is likely to be one of Clinton's allies on Capitol Hill. Wofford, who was an adviser to Martin Luther King and an aide to John F. Kennedy, helped create the Peace Corps and organized a service corps in his home state.

Wofford envisions a national service plan that gives volunteers a wide variety of options—including existing federal programs such as VISTA. National service should be decentralized, should fund ideas generated by local people, governing bodies and institutions, and should favor projects that get people from different classes working together. Wofford believes that the unity between the incoming Clinton administration and congressional leadership bodes well for such a plan.

For those who might balk at the price tag for national service, Wofford is ready with both short-term and long-term economic arguments. He points to studies showing that for every dollar spent, \$1.80 in services is produced. And well-designed programs that require difficult work nourish qualities participants need to be productive workers later.

Wofford also says national service can have benefits that are not easily quantified—participants, for example, will emerge more active politically. "A million young people engaged in problems in America are going to want action on those problems," he says.

To bolster chances that Clinton will strengthen VISTA as part of his national service plan, community organizers, citizen advocates and people in the foundation world plan to send

Clinton's transition team proposals for national service and for other community-based efforts.

Some observers, however, believe VISTA's radical reputation could prove a political liability. In the late '60s, local officials accused VISTA volunteers of biting the hand that fed them. Recalls Wofford, "The mayors and others said, 'For God's sake, the VISTA Volunteers come in here and the next thing I know they've organized a march on city hall.'"

Others say times have changed and predict nobody will bat an eyelash over VISTA. Because there are more community groups today than there were in the '60s, local officials are more accustomed to citizens demands, they argue. And, they note, the word "empowerment" is in vogue—even among Republicans.

Judy Wagner, an aide to Illinois Sen. Paul Simon, doesn't deny VISTA volunteers make waves. "As long as VISTA gets community people working on their own behalf, they are inevitably going to bump up against someone in power," she says. "But that would happen with or without VISTA. It's much more mainstream now."

Clinton acknowledged this tension in his preface to the book on VISTA in Arkansas over the past two decades. "Of course VISTA workers were not free of controversy," he wrote. "Change in those days was often accompanied by strife, but the work on balance had a very positive impact."

As Wofford sees it, what some people call "service" others term "advocacy" or "organizing." Faced with volunteers engaged in confrontations, national service supporters may say, "That's not what we mean. That's politics," Wofford says. To some extent, federal legislation will set limitations on volunteers' political participation, but he believes each community will interpret any future law in its own way. "That's part of what's going to make this a great adventure." ◀

R U S S I A

Brain drain

A

“Soon you will not be able to find a scientist, a technician or a skilled worker anywhere in Russia. They’re all heading West to sell themselves. This is not emigration—it’s evacuation.”

By Fred Weir
MOSCOW

s its isolated economy wrenches open to the world, Russia is unexpectedly facing a massive “brain drain.” As living standards and hopes collapse, everyone with valuable skills to market in the West is scrambling for the exit.

“We must make arrangements for the large-scale departure of Russian citizens to work abroad,” says Igor Khalevinsky, deputy labor minister of the Russian Federation. “It cannot be prevented. By the end of this year, unemployment in Russia will be at least four million. People will try to go where they think they can find work.”

Emigration is still restricted by a variety of Soviet-era laws and bureaucratic regulations. At the beginning of 1993, however, a new law on exit and entry will take effect and Russians will be able to simply apply for a passport and leave the country at will.

The number of would-be émigrés is staggering. A recent poll taken by the Moscow Institute of Sociology found that 9 per-

cent of Russians are actually preparing to leave, and another 16 percent are thinking about it.

Those considering emigration come from all social strata, but disproportionately they are the best educated and most highly skilled members of the former Soviet workforce, whose departure could cripple Russia’s chances for economic recovery.

“The Soviet system of scientific and academic institutions is crumbling,” says a Moscow political scientist. Soon you will not be able to find a scientist, a technician or a skilled worker anywhere in Russia. This is not emigration—it’s evacuation.”

The numbers of people leaving the former Soviet Union have been growing steadily, from 39,000 in 1987 to 600,000 in 1991.

Estimates of this year’s exodus range up to a million. In the past, emigration was largely restricted to minority ethnic groups such as Jews, Volga Germans, Armenians and a few others who left to join relatives abroad. Now virtually everyone seems seized with the impulse to run. But few who dream of streets paved with gold in the West are ever likely to get there. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, most Western nations have steadily stiffened their entry requirements in anticipation of a flood of desperate Russian job-seekers. Not everyone will face the same obstacles, however. The cream of the former Soviet Union’s intellectual and engineering establishment will be greeted with welcoming smiles when they apply at most embassies. Russian economists estimate the average cost of educating a scientific specialist at \$300,000. The value of the subsidy flowing from East to West, even in these crude terms, could turn out to be awesome.

Agents for Western firms are already combing the former USSR for the best talent and technologies. A few well-publicized deals are designed to keep people working in Russia—such as AT&T’s project in Akademgorok, in which 100 of the Soviet Union’s top fiber-optics specialists are paid about \$60 each per month to conduct advanced experiments for the corporation—but most of the scavenging is straightforward cherry-picking, in which the best is plucked and carted away.

Western embassies in Moscow already resemble fortresses under siege, with thousands of desperate Russians crowding the streets outside, each waiting—often hopelessly—for a chance to explain his or her case to an immigration counselor. Black marketeers, mixing with the crowds, do a brisk business in false documents and blank visa forms. On these tragic processes, the fate of Russian economic reversal turns. Stripped of its best-educated and skilled workers—the greatest asset bequeathed to it by the Soviet Union—Russia may well be doomed to sink back into the status of an undeveloped nation.

Fred Weir is an *In These Times* correspondent in Moscow.

ENVIRONMENT

Green talk vs. red ink and red tape

D

Despite Gore's lofty rhetoric, the environment may not get top priority in the new administration. Still, huge opportunities beckon.

By Will Nixon

uring the presidential campaign, Al Gore did a good deed for the Earth almost every day. He picked up beach litter in Sandy Hook, N.J., and hosted a town meeting on the environment in Wilmington, N.C. He visited a recycled oil plant in California and a catalytic converter factory in New Jersey.

Everywhere he went he hammered Bush on the environment-technologies gap. "If the U.S. were as energy efficient as Japan, we would save \$200 billion every year," he said in his major policy speech on the issue at St. Anselm College in Manchester, N.H., the Friday before the election. And that's only for starters. "The global market for green goods and technologies will total \$3 trillion over the next eight years." To support such technology, Japan's Ministry of International Trade and

Industry has launched a \$13 billion research program, and 700 Japanese companies visited the recent Earth Summit trade fair, compared to 25 from the U.S. He then quoted a Japanese executive who said that if the U.S. doesn't wake up "we'll see the same conflict in environmental technology that we see today between GM and Honda."

Did anyone notice? One exit poll found that only 6 percent of the voters considered the environment a key issue, 2 percent less than picked foreign affairs. The American people proved once again that they can take themselves quite seriously as environmentalists without letting the environment intrude upon their politics.

In fact, aside from Gore's ascendancy, it was a tough year. "The League of Conservation Voters spent \$600,000 on the House and Senate races, three times as much as in the 1990 cycle," says the League's assistant director, Ali Webb, who has regularly prodded environmentalists to spend more money up front, rather than waiting to dump \$50 million a year into lobbying after the races

are over. "With the Sierra Club, this was the first time the environmental community spent over \$1 million. But our election results are some of the worst we've seen."

A significant handful of green representatives lost, including Jim Jontz (D-IN), who had introduced a bill to save the ancient forests of the Northwest, Peter Kostmayer (D-PA), sponsor of a moratorium on incinerators, and Gerry Sikorski (D-MN), who had fought for the right of workers to know more about hazardous chemicals in the workplace. Of the 32 environmental state ballot measures, 17 passed, but the most controversial lost—often badly. "Gore's tattered green flag" crowed a *Wall Street Journal* editorial celebrating Ohio's rejection of product warning labels for toxic chemical ingredients and Massachusetts' indifference to stronger recycling.

"That's the worst possible view," replies the Sierra Club's Brett Hulsey, who took a sabbatical to be the Clinton-Gore campaign's environmental policy adviser. "The best possible one is that a candidate can have a responsible environmental platform and still win."

Clinton and Gore promise to take a much different tack on the environment than their predecessors. During the campaign, the two vowed to settle some of the major fights of recent years in environmentalists' favor. In his Earth Day speech and in a later position paper, Clinton said he would designate the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as a wilderness area, ending the debate over oil drilling once and for all. He committed to a target of reducing U.S. carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000, which had been one of Bush's great Earth Summit stumbling blocks. He said the definition of "wetlands" would be decided by

an Academy of Science study now underway. And he promoted the idea of raising automobile fuel-efficiency standards to 40 to 45 miles per gallon, although he didn't quite say he would do it by law. And, of course, Al Gore will be no Dan Quayle, and the Council on Competitiveness will be no more.

"A lot of environmental ideas will be presented by the new vice president," says Reid Wilson, Sierra Club legislative director, "And ideas from others will be run by him. They'll have to pass the 'Gore test.'" Yet, in light of Gore's dueling public personas during the campaign, it is unclear which one will administer the Gore test: Will it be the intellectually passionate visionary who wrote *Earth in the Balance* in his off hours, or the solid political pro who mounted the back of pickup trucks at county fairs to preach the Democratic religion? Policy pros seem to believe they'll be dealing with the latter and discount any notion that *Earth in the Balance* is a guidebook to the incoming administration's policies, even though it sold over 150,000 copies during the campaign to become one of the most popular environmental books since Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.

"In the book, Al Gore said he was taking his best shot as a visionary and divorcing himself from politics," says Joseph Goffman, an attorney at the Environmental Defense Fund. "Whatever he does on the environment will have to pass through the pretty stringent filter of the Clinton political policy mindset." Clinton greatly praised

Gore's book in his Earth Day speech, but he also promoted market-based policies advocated by Connecticut Sen. Joseph Lieberman, the Progressive Policy Institute and the Environmental Defense Fund. We must "recognize that Adam Smith's invisible hand can have a green thumb," Clinton said in a rare environmental soundbite.

"There is a whole class of ideas—'new paradigm' ideas—that is up for grabs between Democrats and Republicans," Goffman says. And the new Democrats have their chance to lay claim to policies that have been incubating for several years. The Clean Air Act Amendments created a pollution trading system to reduce the sulfur-dioxide emissions that cause acid rain. Such trading schemes could conceivably be applied to almost any kind of pollution. The Clean Water Act, for example, is the next big pollution law on Congress' agenda for renewal, so it becomes an obvious place for such

new approaches.

But emissions trading has triggered some heated infighting among environmental groups, and it may do so again. "Some Republicans have used the idea of market-based approaches as a cover for not doing anything at all, so it got a bad name for the company it kept," says Jeremy Rosner of the Progressive Policy Institute, which will soon publish a book, *A Mandate for Change*, with a chapter devoted to market-based possibilities. "But I think a new consensus is emerging between economists, environmentalists and advocacy groups. Like anything, however, you can do it right or you can do it poorly."

Gore wrote *Earth in the Balance* with an air of grandness, applying the epic scale of the Cold War to the environment. He was an avid student of the arms race in the early '80s, so the analogies flowed easily. The environment, he wrote, must



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become "the central organizing principle" of our time. We need to muster a "Global Marshall Plan," which he cautiously hinted would cost \$100 billion a year.

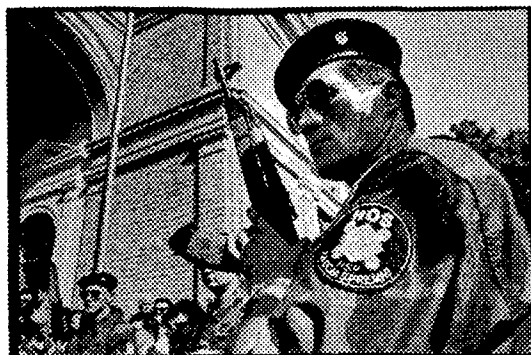
Al Gore at the Earth Summit last summer.

Such sweeping rhetoric gives *Earth in the Balance* its power, lending moral weight to dry subjects and pulling readers through some policy-wonk passages, yet it appears in the book section most at odds with the recent election. The economy, not the environment, will be the central organizing principle of the Clinton administration. Gore's true test will be to see how far he can push environmental reform without the rhetoric. "For the past 12 years, the environmental community has played defense," says Ali Webb.

Now it's time to play offense.

Will Nixon is the associate editor of *E Magazine*.

DIALOGUE



BOSNIAN FANTASY

By Jasminka Udovicki

The Bosnian tragedy prompts the heart to wish for quick, definitive action to stop the aggressor, prevent heinous torture and massacres, and curb the flow of refugees seeking havens that do not exist. Paul Hockenos (*In These Times*, Oct. 28) suggests that we allow the world to set things right again by massive military intervention in former Yugoslavia.

I share the frustration and rage that causes even people on the left to see military action as the only resort (see, for example, *Tikkun*, Sept./Oct.). Such intervention, however, is a fantasy. Against whom should we intervene? Against Serbs in Bosnia, Serbs in Serbia, or both? The *New York Times* and Bill Clinton have advocated bombing Belgrade, which is the center of Serbian anti-war resistance and the home of TV Studio B, Radio Studio B-92, the daily *Borba* and the weekly *Vreme*—the only free media in what was Yugoslavia. They are all fiercely anti-nationalist.

Perhaps Hockenos thinks Serb positions in Bosnia should be destroyed, but the warring towns are partitioned street by street, and each tiny region is held by a different paramilitary group, Serb, Croat or Moslem. The front in the hills is even more undefined. Each hilltop is under control of a different army. The distance separating them is often less than 100 meters. It is often hard to tell which high point belongs to whom and who sits behind whose back. Can the Serb positions be precision-stormed? Or shall we say that such small concerns do not matter in view of the peace that should follow?

Then there is the "intellectual sloppiness" that *The Economist* (Aug. 15) writes about. Readers of news in the U.S., Norway, Spain or Turkey want to know who started this

war, who is right and who wrong. Foreign reporting has constructed a reality of good vs. bad in former Yugoslavia: Anything else would have been too chaotic, too incomprehensible, too laden with awkward names of people and places. After all, the greatest responsibility of the war indisputably lies with the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic.

The world has gradually grown to view all Serbs as Milosevic's supporters. Few understand that Serbia itself is overwhelmingly anti-war, and that the Serbs in Bosnia all too often share the fate of the Moslems. A minority of Bosnian Serbs playing state and war ruthlessly cleansed the self-proclaimed "Serbian Republics" in Bosnia. Countless civilians were killed, including Serbs themselves. Others had to flee their own homes and spend days hidden in tree-

tops watching the enemy burn their villages. Many Serb children were forced to witness massacres of family members, and many old women and men had to spend months in pitch-dark tunnels without food or water. Though less numerous, Bosnian Serbs' unrecorded stories are no different from the stories of the Moslems.

There are 433,000 officially registered refugees in Serbia today, and at least 100,000 unregistered ones. Bosnian Moslems deserve support because 43 percent of their population has been cornered into 5 percent of Bosnian territory as the result of the Serbian and Croatian land grabs.

But all sides in this war have used similar methods. As Misha Glenny's recent book, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, documents, there is no good war being fought in the Balkans.

That is why Bosnia would turn out to be a more horrific case of intervention than Vietnam. In Vietnam, the U.S. adversary was a peaceable, Buddhist population, led by a soldier-sage, Ho Chi Minh. The

*For the Moslems
to win back
their territories
through foreign
intervention
would be an
exercise in self-
destruction.*

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war in Bosnia is propelled by stomach-churning brutality of aggressive, virulent nationalisms on all sides. Foreign intervention would intensify such aggression, unleashing brutality on an even vaster scale and pulling the intervening powers into a quagmire where all bets are off. Military intervention would augment the misery without addressing the underlying causes of the war. In the absence of any clear Western interests in the region, the foreign powers would soon get sick of the slaughter and quit, leaving behind a situation more poisoned than ever.

By urging intervention, Hockenos ignores the fact that Milosevic's is now a spent regime on a desperate if unscrupulous collision course with a determined, energetic and popular adversary—Prime Minister Milan Panic. He and his first-rate cabinet, made up of ministers deeply committed to ending the war, have inherited an intensely hostile pro-Milosevic parliament that has twice attempted to oust Panic. All indicators suggest that if he wins the pending elections, Panic would move swiftly to recognize all breakaway states of former Yugoslavia; grant full civil, political and cultural rights to all minorities in Yugoslavia and demand the same rights for Serbs outside of Serbia; support the work of an international war-crimes commission; and encourage porous borders between the newly constituted states to allow forms of normal life to take root as soon as possible.

Accomplishing this could well be the toughest job in the world. But for the Moslems to win back their territories through foreign intervention and prolonged warfare would be an exercise in self-destruction. Few would be left to enjoy the victory. Before the December elections, Panic needs from the West a gesture of trust (such as humanitarian aid in the form of heating oil, for example) which would demonstrate support for the only politician unequivocally talking peace in the Balkans.

Jasminka Udovicki is an associate professor at Massachusetts College of Art in Boston.



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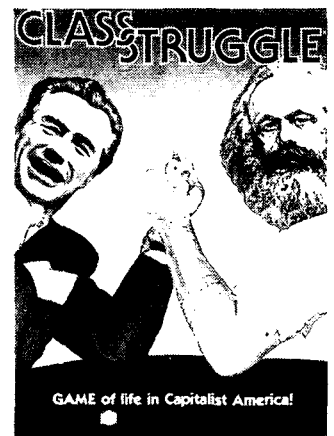
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B L A C K A M E R I C A

The postmodern Malcolm X

A

*Dead for
27 years,
Malcolm has
become a saint,
a soundbite, a
commodity.*

By Salim Muwakkil

African-American youth are so starved for inspirational leadership these days that they have exhumed the 27-year-dead Malcolm X, dusted him off and anointed him as their preferred leader. This back-to-the-future choice is in harmony with the current black nationalist revival, which had been surging throughout the black community long before Spike Lee began hyping his Malcolm X film.

But this wholesale and adoring appropriation of Malcolm as a black nationalist icon is problematic. For one thing, he's dead and his rougher edges have been smoothed out by the haze of history. And although Malcolm was ever-evolving, the hagiographers have frozen him in their image. But more significantly, Malcolm's legacy contains no original theo-

ries, no systematic ideology or overarching social vision.

His most publicized speeches were delivered while he was in the fold of Elijah Muhammad's racist Nation of Islam (NOI). And after abandoning the NOI's genetic theology, he embraced the more inclusive doctrines of Sunni Islam. But ideologically, Malcolm remained a black nationalist, although his program differed only slightly from those ethnic solidarity models that democratic pluralists had long advocated.

So it seems clear that Malcolm's current eminence is more a product of his "no sell-out" attitude than of any revolutionary doctrine he propounded. Frustrated by the conciliatory stances of the politicians and academics who have assumed the mantle of black leadership in these post-civil rights days, African-American youth yearn for the kind of uncompromising leadership embodied in Malcolm's "by any means necessary" persona. Many of them have watched the African-American community deteriorate even as record numbers of black politicians won political office. This sense of frustration

is acute and helps explain why current NOI chief Louis Farrakhan is so popular among young African-Americans.

And although Spike Lee has exploited this infatuation with Malcolm as a symbol of racial defiance, his film attempts to portray a more complex man. Malcolm's clearest legacy was his ability to evolve, to fearlessly follow his truth, and Lee's film subtly makes that case.

Of course, this is not to say that Malcolm's *attitude* was irrelevant. Quite the contrary: His articulate deconstruction of American racism spoke directly to African-Americans' frustrations—especially those of black urban dwellers. As a Harlem youngster in the late '50s and early '60s, I heard Malcolm X speak many times at Harlem Square, a location Lee recreated in *Malcolm X*. Malcolm was shockingly charismatic. His staccato oratory was precise and informed. His slashing denunciations of whites were delivered in sober, matter-of-fact tones and thus seemed more authentic.

We knew that Malcolm's intellect and wit were able matches for even the most educated of adversaries. Yet he identified himself as a man of the masses. It was clear to us that the gaunt Muslim minister had already graduated from the hustler-oriented street life we romanticized so foolishly. Malcolm knew the criminal justice system, the welfare system and all the ups and downs of the down-and-outs. But he transcended it all, and by his example others gained confidence in their own potential. That was the Malcolm who helped the NOI reform so many victims of the underground economy.

Almost single-handedly, Malcolm removed the stigma of "corniness" from intellectual achievement. He translated his

hip, urbane, street-life sensibility into a kind of intellectual style we all could accept. We wanted to talk like Malcolm; his meticulous diction, vast vocabulary and knowledge of history sent us to the dictionary and the library. The intellectual explosion he triggered has yet to be fully appreciated, and Lee's bio-pic offers very little illumination of that Malcolm X.

The intensity of Malcolm's identity quest, and the price he paid for making it, lit the fuse for the Black Power explosion and the various movements it provoked: the cultural nationalists, the Pan-Africanists, the black arts movement, the Black Panther Party, the black studies movement, a host of indigenous Islamic groupings and more.

But the ideological turbulence of Malcolm's last months get short shrift in Lee's film. The movie focuses instead on the pilgrimage to Mecca as a true conversion experience. This was unlikely. Malcolm had been in the Middle East in 1959 and knew of white Muslims. He had long reconciled that experience with the NOI's racist doctrines. More likely, Malcolm professed his conversion to provide himself with a theological alternative to the racial reductionist catechism of his NOI rivals.

Malcolm's post-NOI shifts have allowed a wide range of partisans to claim his legacy. Pan-Africanists insist that Malcolm's plan was to prepare black Americans for eventual emigration to Africa. Black separatists claim a nation within a nation was his ultimate aim. Cultural nationalists argue that Malcolm wanted to connect African-Americans to culture of the motherland. Muslims tout him as a great propagator of Islam. Certain socialist groups maintain that Malcolm embraced dialectical materialism before he died. Integrationists claim him for his newfound focus on the content of character rather than color. Conservatives like



Clarence Thomas, Thomas Sowell and the *Wall Street Journal's* editorial page hail Malcolm as an evangelist for self-help and traditional family values. Ideological scavengers have plucked at his legacy so relentlessly he has become a hero-without-portfolio.

Even potato chip makers have hopped on the "X" bandwagon.

Continued on page 39

I N T H E A R T S

Bigger than life

Spike Lee, like many film biographers before him, doesn't know when to stop. Malcolm the man isn't good enough. Lee aims to make him better.

By Pat Dowell

From its first moment, Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* conspicuously lays claim to a venerable Hollywood pedigree. An American flag fills the screen, recalling the opening of *Patton*, the Oscar-winning 1970 bio-pic of the controversial World War II general.

But in Lee's movie, the flag starts to burn. Instead of a patriotic pep talk from Old Blood and Guts, we get a look at the Rodney King tape. (The pep talk will come later, in Malcolm's speeches.) The flag burns down to a fragment in the shape of the film's logo (and current fashion statement), "X."

It's clear from the start that Lee wants to turn the old Hollywood pieties upside down. And to some degree he has. He's made a stirring if conventional film about Malcolm X, an epic if there ever was one. Perched somewhere between *Gandhi* and *JFK* in terms of

audacity and style, it's a first-rate teaching tool even if, in working with the terms of the Hollywood bio-pic, Lee has to whittle down a complex human being into just another hero.

Malcolm X shares with *Gandhi*, and most other bio-pics produced by the studios these days, a hugeness and ambition that tend to pre-empt quibbles. Locations all over the world! A cast of thousands! Screen-filling production numbers! (One can imagine Lee still chafing at the failure of the ambitious *School Daze*, and determined to keep on making his musical till he gets it right.)

Lee was thinking *big*, on the order of David (Lawrence of Arabia) Lean, according to his book about the making of *Malcolm X*—just like that other Lean wannabe, Richard Attenborough, who directed *Gandhi*.

Spike Lee is an immeasurably more imaginative filmmaker than Richard Attenborough, and one has to admire the way he keeps the sprawling story of *Malcolm X* on

track. Yet it's ironic that in this movie, expected to be the most controversial film of a hardly unpublicized career, Lee's direction is less dynamic and less daring than in the relatively small-scale *Do the Right Thing*.

The camera does prowl and glide, using odd angles, but the director mostly avoids bold devices. Instead, Lee relies on his actors to carry the meaning—which Denzel Washington certainly does in the title role. This is a movie of startling speeches and intimate human gestures. Its most perfect scene may be the tiny gem in which a reborn Malcolm visits an old crime pal who tried to kill him once, and comforts the ailing man with selfless delicacy.

The few directorial flourishes do stand out. Late in life, an image of a threatened Malcolm in his hotel room takes a slow 360-degree spin. The next day, when he approaches the Audubon Ballroom, he floats forward on the street, as if jet-propelled for a moment toward his fate.

That fate—Malcolm's martyrdom—calls him all through the movie, an undertow common to bio-pics about murdered men. When Malcolm and Shorty (the camera-hogging buddy role that Lee takes for himself) are zoot-suited



Malcolm X
Directed by Spike Lee



Photos ©1992 Warner Bros. Inc.

Is this to pacify the widow Betty Shabazz, as Lee suggests in his book, or to add to the converted Malcolm's personal perfection in an era of public outcry about the deteriorating black family?

Lee also tailors Malcolm to his own needs. There's scarcely a hint of Malcolm's unflattering remarks about Jews during his fieriest days as a Black Muslim preacher. Lee too has had public skirmishes over anti-Semitism. He may not have wanted to open that can of worms again. Or perhaps he simply omitted those statements because Malcolm softened his positions late in life.

On the other hand, Lee does not include all of Malcolm's changes of heart. Malcolm's snub of a liberal white coed's offer to help his movement is a seminal movie episode, even though Malcolm expressed regret about that incident in the autobiography. The film follows that biography faithfully, leaving the book's embellishments, mythmaking and omissions largely intact.

The film goes past the memoirs, of course, to include Malcolm's death. Lee tacks on a eulogy—a device that, if a bio-pic has done its work, is entirely superfluous. This film *has*, and the eulogy *is*—but I've never seen a bio-pic yet that knew when to stop. The man is never

teenagers, playing at gangsters and cocking fingers at each other on a tawny day in a Boston park, we hear a full-fledged gunshot. We hear it again when Malcolm samples his second line of cocaine. Destiny waits, Lee seems to be saying.

Like any biographer, Lee has to shape the life he chronicles and decide what to put in and what to leave out. He follows the bio-pic rule of removing mostly warts. The paternity suits brought against Elijah Muhammad by his former secretaries are not presented as the result of Malcolm's urging, as biographers assert they were and as even Lee discovered in his research. Would that have made Malcolm look too much like an intriguer?

Malcolm's marriage to Betty is pictured as stressless ("we've never fought") until he starts to break with Elijah.

good enough for the movie. The bio-pic needs to make him better. It needs to certify his fame, and in so doing, it usually diminishes him. The movie's coda of newsreels and amens, especially, exhorts us to root for Malcolm rather than understand him.

Lee has been quoted as urging children to skip class for the movie, because, he said, he himself had been taken on a school field trip to see *Gone with the Wind*. Lee has shaped his movie career to answer that insult. He's trying to beat Hollywood at its own game, answering the white epic with a black one, fashioning a new African-American bio-pic by the old rules.

Lee succeeds, but at a price. Malcolm needs no apotheosis to be a great man, but he gets one in *Malcolm X*. It consolidates a personality cult of the sort he outgrew in real life. ◀

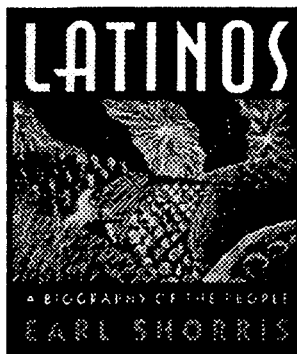
IN PRINT

Cultural impersonation

By Ilan Stavans

How can it happen that a book such as *Latinos* is applauded by the Anglo media without any serious criticism? How is it that it passes as anthropological research? The only explanation I find is that what is known in mainstream U.S. culture about Hispanics is of disturbingly limited scope.

In over 500 pages, Earl Shorris—a native of El Paso, Texas—intertwines historical research, reportage, interviews, literary criticism, sociological analysis and personal memoirs to build a colorful, grand-scale mural à la Diego Rivera, with Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Colombians and other subgroups as its principal focus. But in spite of his ambitious drive and encyclopedic knowledge, the result is troublesome.



Latinos: A Biography of the People

By Earl Shorris

Norton, 520 pp., \$25

First, although Shorris' left-wing loyalties are in the right place, his insight is annoyingly limited. He emerges as a distant and uninvolved observer, a tourist in the Latino world. He never really offers a convincing explanation as to why a non-Hispanic like himself, rather than somebody from the Latino community, should be explaining the Latino experience to an English-speaking audience. What is missing is, in John Berger's words, a view of "the observer observing himself."

Second, while Anglos are hungry for information about Hispanics, Shorris' gargantuan volume is not satisfying simply because what is needed is not a history. Before him, two previous "collective biographies"—H. Gann and Peter J. Duigan's *The Hispanics in the United States: A History*, and Joan W. Moore and Harry Pachon's *Hispanics in the United States*—opened up the field. What is needed at this point is a study like Edward Said's *Orientalism*: less an explanation of dates and data and more an epistemological discussion of how the Hispanic and Anglo idiosyncrasies differ—

not a mural but an interpretation.

My unhappiness with Shorris' *Latinos* emerges from its numerous silences. How can one write a volume about Chicanos without even mentioning Oscar "Zeta" Acosta, the militant lawyer and novelist of the '60s who wrote the classic, *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*? Or what about Luis Valdez, the playwright responsible for the extraordinary play and film, *Zoot Suit*? What good is it to talk about how many Mexican restaurants there are in the Boston and Los Angeles areas when Octavio Paz' indispensable *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, perhaps the most influential study on the Mexican (and, for that matter, Hispanic) psyche, is only mentioned in a passing footnote?

Shorris' 23-page index is a festive parade of personalities many Americans most probably have never heard of. But those with even a limited knowledge are likely to be surprised: Isaac Godelmberg, for instance, a Peruvian novelist in Manhattan who never wrote a word of English, is featured while Ed Vega, the most outspoken Puerto Rican writer in the mainland, is not. How to account for Alex Haley, Al Capone and Shorris' family appearing, while the Spanish writer Felipe Alfau (who wrote *Locos: A Comedy of Gestures*), the Dominican Julia Alvarez (who is responsible for *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*), and the Chilean Elena Castedo (who was nominated for the 1990 National Book Award with *Paradise*)—three major pens concerned with immigration and cultural impersonation—are nowhere to be found? And this is not just a problem in Shorris' discussion of literature. Similar difficulties plague his coverage of music, art, cuisine, film and the theater.

When I claim an Anglo is incapable of understanding the task of deciphering the Hispanic psychology, I am fully aware of the implications of my argument. It is one thing to wonder if a person needs to suffer an accident in order to describe it, and quite another to question the validity of trans-ethnic journeys: members of one ethnic group analyzing the idiosyncrasies of another.

The controversies ignited by August Wilson and Spike Lee surrounding the play *The Piano Lesson* and the movie *Malcolm X* come to mind: Does one need to be of African descent to direct a play or movie about the black experience in the United States? We live in a culture of impersonators. In fact, Shorris' book could be placed on the same shelf alongside *The Education of Little Tree*, a semi-autobiography by a white supremacist author passing as an American Indian, and next to Danny Santiago, responsible for *Famous All Over Town*, a novel acclaimed as a stunning debut by a young Chicano until the true identity of its creator, a left-wing screenplay writer blacklisted during the McCarthy era, came to light.

The reader of *Latinos* runs the risk of misunderstanding the Hispanic minority. Shorris' blunders are many. As a Spanish saying claims, "His views should be taken with gloves."

Ilán Stavans, a Mexican novelist and critic, was awarded the 1992 Latino Literature Prize.

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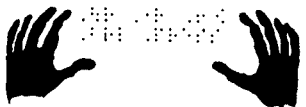
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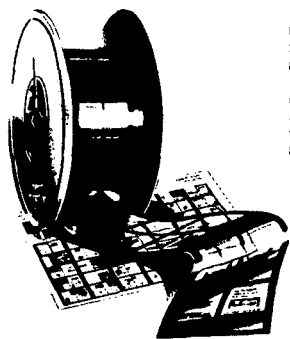
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Continued from page 33

The NOI, however, still reviles him for his criticism of Elijah Muhammad, the man they say saved and taught Malcolm everything he knew. Malcolm had gone public with his condemnations of Muhammad's sexual trysts with several young secretaries. Virtually alone among black nationalist groups, the NOI ridicules Malcolm as an ungrateful and unworthy student of Elijah Muhammad, totally undeserving of his popular acclaim. In their inner counsels, NOI members still refer to him as "The Hypocrite."

Some minor skirmishes between NOI members and defenders of Malcolm are erupting across the country. In fact, Farrakhan believes the U.S. government seeks to use

**Louis
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between
Malcolm's
acolytes and the
Nation of Islam.**

Lee's movie to resurrect the deadly animosities between Malcolm's acolytes and the NOI. And, as Lee's film indicates, that bad blood is the probable reason for Malcolm's death. By the time of his February 21, 1965, assassination, Malcolm had become very outspoken in criticizing a group he spent 12 years helping to build.

Much evidence indicates that Malcolm was assassinated by NOI members dispatched from Newark Mosque No. 25. Following Malcolm's murder, James Shabazz, Mosque 25's minister, was assigned to Malcolm's coveted Harlem ministry job. Some insiders say Shabazz' appointment

was a clear reward for his mosque's involvement in the killing—although it also seems clear that the federal government was at least aware of the plot.

And in the sense of embattlement that followed revelations in the '70s that the FBI had infiltrated and disrupted various black groups, more and more African-Americans came to hold the U.S. government responsible for Malcolm's murder. The NOI's role drifted into the background. Farrakhan believes the government seeks to rekindle old sectarian tensions, using the film as a pretext.

It's not exactly an unfounded fear. Two months ago, Farrakhan attracted at least 50,000 people to hear him speak at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta. Even during his most popular years, Malcolm X never attracted that much attention, yet the FBI's J. Edgar Hoover is on record as fearing Malcolm's popularity. It is reasonable to assume that the federal gov-

ernment is at least as troubled by Farrakhan's skyrocketing popularity.

But suspicions of government skulduggery don't excuse the NOI's role in Malcolm's murder. Among many people knowledgeable about the case, there is a general agreement that the NOI did the deed. In fact, Mujahid Abdul Halim (né Thomas Hayer) admitted to plotting Malcolm's murder with other members of the Newark mosque. Like virtually every other member of the NOI, they hated Malcolm for "defaming" the name of Elijah Muhammad. Farrakhan himself wrote that Malcolm was "worthy of death" in the 1964 edition of *Muhammad Speaks*. Halim has testified in court that the other two accused assassins—Khalil Islam (né Thomas Johnson) and Muhammad Abdul Aziz (né Norman Butler)—had nothing to do with the plot.

Ironically, all three of the men charged with Malcolm's murder are now followers of Imam Warith Deen Mohammed (né Wallace Delaney Muhammad), the son and successor of Elijah Muhammad. When Elijah died in February 1975, Mohammed (who altered the spelling of his last name for sectarian reasons) took over and eventually changed the name and theology of the group, bringing it in line with the Islamic orthodoxy that Malcolm championed in his last days. Meanwhile, Farrakhan—who was recruited by Malcolm and served as his assistant in the Boston mosque—has re-established an NOI, which remains true to Elijah Muhammad's racist teachings.

Today, Malcolm X has become a kind of postmodern icon, a text. He is a pastiche of competing truisms, a compendium of opposing impulses. Malcolm X, the text, is high art and pop art, agitprop and commercialism. He is a saint, a soundbite and a commodity. Many black youth first heard his stern voice while dancing to a song called "Party for Your Right to Fight," by the rap group Public Enemy. Others first found his thoughts and writings in their college syllabus. Despite its intended value as a symbol of rejection, Malcolm's "X" has for months served as a politically correct logo for hats, shirts, shoes—and even potato chips.

Much like Spike Lee, Malcolm X has gained in commercial appeal because he is perceived as an uncompromising, militant race man. Both of these African-American originals are benefiting from the commodification of militance, the profits of rage. Too bad only Lee is alive to collect. ◀

C A L E N D A R

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If Jesus Had Handlers

By Miles Harvey

The Messiah Makers, inc.

Jerusalem Mecca Jonestown

MEMO

FROM: HQ

TO: J.C. Advance Team

RE: Client's performance

Strategy staff is greatly concerned about Client's repeated gaffes, which threaten not only this campaign but TMM's rep as industry leader. Please inform Client that unless situation is rectified ASAP, He will be asked to find other representation. TMM, to paraphrase Client's stump speech, is not willing to die for Client's sins.

Following areas demand immediate action:

- 1) While relieved that Client has finally been won over to effectiveness of negative campaigning, HQ is alarmed by recent "den of thieves" soundbite. Surely Client is not so naive as to follow through on threat to drive money-changers from Temple. Please remind Client money-changers are key constituency. (Who does He think provided funding for all those fish at recent media event?) HQ has scheduled a Tuesday lunch for Client with MCPAC lobbyists. Instruct Him to apologize and compromise.
- 2) Advance team must keep Client out of Q-and-A situations at all costs. Whenever He shoots from hip there's trouble. Recent quote (in *Judea Register-Star*) is perfect example: "Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." Focus groups show that while such rhetoric plays well with one target audience (e.g., "forgotten slave class"), it alienates all other sectors and reinforces Client's "Prophet Moonbeam" image as left-wing kook. Instruct Client that from now on He will not say anything unto anyone, verily or otherwise, without first clearing it with HQ.
- 3) In related matter, Client's line about camel and needle's eye is not, as old adage goes, playing well in Peraea. Instruct Client to leave metaphors to speechwriters.
- 4) HQ is deeply disturbed by incident involving "fallen woman," who washed Client's feet with tears, wiped Client's feet with hair, anointed Client's feet with ointment, etc. Major damage control may be necessary. Fact that Client has "Teflon Savior" image with regard to sin will not deter woman from going to tabloids. In future, keep Client away from all fallen women and ban ointments from entourage.
- 5) Client's attempts to position himself as "the education Prophet," "the healing Prophet," "the love prophet," "the peace prophet," etc., only muddy His message. Remind Client (until He gets it into His fat skull) of staff's motivational motto for focus of campaign: *Salvation, Stupid.*



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IN THE END